MORE'S UTOPIA

&

HIS SOCIAL TEACHING

Time alway trieth out the truth

MORE

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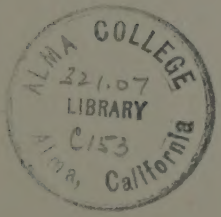
&

HIS SOCIAL TEACHING

BY

W. E. CAMPBELL

EDITOR OF 'THE ENGLISH WORKS OF SIR THOMAS MORE'



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TO

R. H. TAWNEY

THE PRESIDENT

AND MY FELLOW MEMBERS OF THE

WORKERS' EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION

PREFACE

A WRITER has often titles for a book which it may be better not to print. But in this case their disclosure may help to define a little more clearly the purpose with which this book was written. In fact, as it stands, it may truthfully be called *Meditatio Mori*, for it sums up the result of a good many years of pondering upon the connection between the religious and social philosophy of Sir Thomas More. And again, if one may be allowed to force a very modern title upon a man who belongs almost as much to us as he did to his own time, the book might truthfully be named *The Distributive Man in the Making*, and with this title may one presume to suggest that it may be read as a complement to Mr. Tawney's own book, *The Acquisitive Society*, which appeared some years ago ?

The writer wishes to express his acknowledgment to the proprietors of the *Dublin Review* for permission to incorporate an article contributed to that periodical.

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Conclusion, " the ruler who can find no other way for correcting the errors of his people but by taking from them the conveniences of life, shows that he knows not what it is to govern a free nation," Mr. Tawney's opinion of the English Agrarian Revolution in the sixteenth century.

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The crux of the social problem as understood by Raphael Hythloday is stated. " I cannot think," he says, " that a nation can be governed either justly or happily as long as there is any private property, and while money is the standard of all things."

" On the contrary," replies More, " it seems to me that men cannot live conveniently where all things are held in common. How can there be any plenty where every one will excuse himself from labour ? For since the hope of gain doth not excite a man, he will trust to other men to do for him what he is under no necessity to do for himself and so become lazy. And if people come to be pinched with want and yet cannot dispose of anything as their own, what can follow upon this but perpetual sedition and bloodshed, especially since *reverence and authority due to magistrates falls to the ground ? For I cannot imagine how reverence and authority can be kept up among those that are in all material things equal to one another*."

Here we have More and Hythloday stating from their opposite points of view their arguments for and against the existence of private property. And it is of interest to notice that More himself seems to attach an almost capital importance to certain of his own arguments which have escaped the notice of nearly all our modern sociological writers.

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We come now to the second book, in which we are introduced to Utopia itself, its very name, in

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spite of the verisimilitude given to it by More's genius, signifying that it never was and is nowhere to be found. So, too, the names of all the places and people connected with it do but proclaim that it is but the best of all More's " merry tales." Its pattern and " atmosphere " are in vivid contrast to the realism of the first book, and an ironical emphasis is laid on all the perfect happenings which did not happen in the England More knew, or in any other country of which fallen man has earthly experience. Contrast between Plato's views on family life and those expressed in the *Utopia*, which did but reflect More's own conviction as to the paramount importance of the institution of the Family in the life of the State.

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In the second book Hythloday introduces to the notice of the Utopians a kind of Communism which More did believe in, and which he ably defended in his *Supplication of Souls* and in other writings of his. In contradistinction to the Communism of the Utopians and to that advocated by Hythloday himself in the first book, and which More found so impracticable, a Communism is here suggested which was neither compulsory nor enforced by the State in any way, but was voluntary and so practical that it had been practised all over Christendom for fifteen hundred years.

The early Christians, he tells us, as well as " the more serious sort of Christians ever since," voluntarily gave up their private property, and shared their goods among those of their brethren who were in need, under that supernatural or divine impulse which we call charity. And this is just the contrary of State Communism, which compels its subjects to give up their private property and share it round precisely because it has no effective belief that the divine impulse of charity can take possession of the human heart. And how could it be

expected to do so since Communism allows no effective belief in God Himself?

But the Holy Spirit of God, speaking not only in the hearts of men but also and always until the end of the world through the mouth of the Catholic Church, teaches us how to turn our naturally increasing desires for pleasure, for property, and for power into a supernaturally decreasing desire for these very same things, good in themselves, but better when given than when received, and best of all when foregone, for the love and glory of God and the relief of man's estate.

Hence it is, that if men will only *pray*, they can and will become, by their voluntary association together in the Catholic Church, the most effective instruments of social betterment the world has ever known. But this can only happen in so far as they *will* it so to do; for *God Himself, having given to every man the inestimable gift of free will, has not bound Himself to better a man or any society of men unless they wish and desire Him to do so—that wish and desire in itself being the essence of all true prayer.*

INTRODUCTION

It has been remarked by M. Dermenghem [1] in his recent study of the *Utopia* that if we are to understand the character and philosophy of Sir Thomas More aright we should read not only his *Utopia* but his other writings as well. But as these are voluminous and costly, and at present are for the most part only to be found in William Rastell's Black Letter Edition of 1557, it is difficult for many to act upon M. Dermenghem's advice. But for those who care to read the following chapters it may be useful instead to have a very brief summary of that philosophy of individual and social life which lay implicit in all More's writings and not least in the *Utopia* with which we are here concerned.

Sir Thomas More is one of those great figures that stand at the parting ways of history. He was as genuinely linked with the classical and patristic and mediaeval past as he was with the scientific future in which so many now put their hopes. But

[1] *Thomas Morus et Les Utopistes de la Renaissance*, Paris, 1927, p. 106.

while he was as intellectually committed as the best minds in each of these periods were to the special interests of each, he had, what some of them had not, a never-failing and an ever-deepening supernatural faith. None can rightly understand More who do not understand this, and likewise understand, at the same time, that because he had this supernatural faith he also had faith in natural reason. Thus he differed, on the one hand, from the reformers who, in the name of faith, despised natural reason, and, on the other, from the later rationalists of the French Revolution, who in the name of reason despised supernatural faith. But with him faith came first, " the comen knowen faith " as he called it, " of all Christian men for this fifteen hundred year." " Reason," he also wrote, " so far from being an enemy to faith, is servant to faith."

More, therefore, was neither wholly of the past, as some have said, nor of the future, as others have believed, but really of the eternal present—that eternal present of which Shelley had knowledge when he wrote

> The One Remains,
> The many change and pass,

and which More had knowledge of too, but, perhaps,

in a far profounder way. The truth, then, for which More stood, by which he lived, and for which he died, was necessarily the most reasonable of all truths, the truth that is always true. And because it was supernatural, it was also social truth, as one hopes to show in the course of these chapters, " the truth by which the nations live " and without which they disintegrate and die. Only such truth as this can be believed in, as he believed in it, with the highest and most spiritual certitude ; for it is the whole truth which ever lives and never changes, the truth about human life. Its effect on More's own life has been certified by Dean Swift, no easy creditor of our frail human nature, when he wrote that Sir Thomas More was the person " of the greatest virtue that this kingdom has ever produced." But in England, subsequent to the religious changes brought about in Tudor times, the true proportions of More's character and thought have been difficult of access, and even when accessible, uncongenial to the understanding of generations of men and women who believed themselves to have outgrown what to More was a matter of invincible certitude.

What, then, do we mean when we say that More stood for the eternal present rather than for a past that could never return or for a future that might never

be realised? People of to-day are apt to think of truth in two ways—first, the truth that they believe to be true; and, secondly, the truth as other people see it, and neither of them true enough for their whole-hearted and unchanging assent. But for More, besides these two very subjective, very relative and very changeable kinds of truth—to which, as we see in the *Utopia*, he was always ready to give his serious, and sometimes playful, attention—there was a third kind—God's kind, a truth so true that it always *is*, so true that it never changes, so true that it changes us for the better as we come to know it more, so true that we change for the worse if, deliberately, we neglect it, or turn our backs upon it, so that at last we may cease to know it at all in any real way.

But what is this truth for which More, and those that have lived and died like More, have ever stood? It is the truth of that Eternal Order ever present to God Himself, the truth that was revealed in the life and person of Jesus Christ, His Son, our Lord, the truth that, after His passion and death and resurrection and ascension into heaven, was perpetuated in time as the revelation of Himself when, upon the day of Pentecost, He founded and possessed and informed by His Holy Spirit the

Visible Body of His Catholic Church. And this divinely human Order of Human Life is even now in the world, and will be so to the end.

Luther contended that this Church, even that part of it which is still on earth, was so spiritual and so immaterial that it was both invisible and sinless; but More denied Luther's new doctrine, and held what had always been held before, that it was visible but imperfect, and necessarily so because of the human imperfection of its members; although, he also held, that this did not prevent it from being divinely constituted, divinely inspired and divinely perpetuated in the world. This conception of the visible Church, divine in its origin, endurance and inspiration, although imperfect in this life because of the human imperfection of its members, being the necessary condition of their mortal lives, is so unmistakably at the back of all More's social teaching, that it had better be stated in his own words:

Luther saith that his unknown Church must be a sinless Church, since Christ prophesied that "the gates of hell should not prevail against it"; and the gates of hell do prevail against every man that sinneth and against any Church that containeth such men, to wit, the Catholic Church as we commonly know it. If this be so what church can we find on earth that doth not sin?

And thus he [Luther], that would have the Church to be only a secret and unknowen sort of folk that doth not sin, yet confesseth that there be no such. . . .

The Church, therefore, [concludes More] must needs be the comen knowen multitude of Christian men, good and bad together, while the Church is here on earth. For this net of Christ hath, for the while, good fishes and bad. And this field of Christ beareth for the while good corn and cockle till it shall be at the day of doom purified, and all the bad cast out, and only the good then remain. Christ Himself said to His apostles, "Now be you all clean; but not all," and yet they were all of His Church, albeit that one of them was, as our Saviour said, a devil. And if there were none of the Church but good men, as long as they were good, then had St. Peter been once no part of the Church, after that Christ had appointed him for chief. But our Lord, in this His mystical body of His Church, carried His members, some sick, some whole, and all sickly. . . . But when the time shall come that this Church shall whole change her place and have heaven for her dwelling instead of earth, after the final judgment pronounced and given, when God shall with His spouse, this Church of Christ, enter into the pleasant wedding chamber to the bed of eternal rest, then shall all these scalde and scab pieces scale clean off, and the whole body of Christ's holy Church remain pure, clean and glorious without wem, wrinkle or spot, which is (and for the while, I ween, will be, as long as she is here) as scabbed as ever was Job; and yet her loving spouse leaveth her not, but continually goeth about by many manner medicines, some bitter,

some sweet, some easy, some grievous, some painful, some pleasant, to cure her.[1]

This Church, then, though visible and visibly imperfect on its human side, is dark to the world, as Christ said it would be, on the side of its divinity; and men and women require from God Himself the gift of faith to make them believe it to be divine in spite of what they so evidently see of its necessarily imperfect humanity.

A divine and eternal Order of Life is, therefore, even now in the world; and some there are who discern it, but very far off; others, perhaps, nearer but in sad disproportion; others, again, less confusedly and more clearly as a whole. But they discern it best who follow our Lord most closely in their daily lives; and because they have humility in proportion to their spiritual clear-sightedness, while they discern it but in part, they are able, by faith, to believe in it and to obey it as a whole. For they understand that while they themselves are but imperfect parts and members of Christ, His Body is the Church as a whole. They, too, are able to tell others of what they have seen and touched and handled and believed of this their "beloved Community," a community never humanly perfect on

[1] *The Dialogue Concerning Tyndale*, ii. c. 4, pp. 136-143 *passim*.

earth, but nevertheless, as they believe, divinely constituted and inspired and always, in spite of every failure, striving unitedly for the final perfection of the life to come. These men too, if considered individually, are the most human of all human creatures; for by their free and united co-operation with God's creative will they become what God meant them to be. And of such was Blessed Sir Thomas More, or to speak more accurately, such he became in the perfection of his days.

The mention, a few lines previously, of the "beloved Community," reminds one of some just words used by the author of the phrase, Josiah Royce, in criticism of the well-known Gifford Lectures of his Harvard colleague, William James, on *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, which one had the good fortune to hear delivered in Edinburgh some years ago. "James supposed," he writes, "that the religious experience of a church [as distinguished from that of an individual] must needs be 'conventional,' and consequently lacking in depth and sincerity. This, to my mind, was a profound and momentous error in the whole religious philosophy of our greatest American master in the study of the psychology of religious experience. All experience must be *at least* individual experience;

but unless it is *also* [the italics are Royce's] social experience, and unless the whole religious community which is in question unites to share it, this experience is but as sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal. This is the truth that Paul saw . . . this is the essence of Christianity." [1]

[1] *The Problem of Christianity*, pp. xv and xvi.

CHAPTER ONE

THE *Utopia* was published abroad, and in Latin, when More was thirty-eight years old. Its background is Catholic Christendom with its steadfast mountains and eternal hills to which, throughout his life, More himself never failed to look for help.

But in the foreground great changes, secular, spatial and spiritual, were in movement, changes which were of immense and absorbing importance to those who were then alive, and hardly less so to us who are living so many centuries later.

Almost within a year of More's birth, Caxton had returned to London from the beautiful city of Bruges and had brought with him his first printing press and with it a knowledge and enthusiasm that enabled him to put it to its fullest use. And what he did in London, other printers, no less famous than himself, were doing in the great cities of the continent. Thus by the invention and distribution of the printed word both the records of the old learning, and of

the " new " which was so soon to follow it, were multiplied and circulated with an increasing rapidity throughout the then known civilised world.

Again, when More was a boy of fifteen, Columbus brought to the old world its first tidings of the new ; and in the years that immediately followed the great seamen of that time opened up new routes both east and west for the merchant adventurers of England, of Portugal and of Spain.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the *Utopia* itself purports to relate the adventures of one Raphael Hythloday, a seafaring man, who is also a keen philosopher about things both new and old. It was published in 1516, between More's incomplete *Life of Richard III* (1513) and his meditation on the *Four Last Things*, also incomplete, indicating, by the way, not only how widely historical and sociological but also how deeply spiritual his interests were during these nine years between his thirty-sixth birthday and his forty-fifth.

There is little doubt that he himself regarded the *Utopia* as one of the least serious of his literary efforts ; and probably in order to prevent it from being read by the " unco' guid " who might take it too seriously, he left it in its original Latin, fearing, as he wrote later, that " since men by their own

default misconstrue and take harm from the very scripture of God " they might also take harm from " a work that I myself have written ere this, albeit there be no harm therein." [1] But as in 1551, sixteen years after More's death, Ralph Robinson published an English translation of it; and as, in this form, it has become an English classic, the best known and the most misunderstood of all his writings, one further attempt to understand it may not be amiss.

One fact has been overlooked by nearly all commentators upon the *Utopia*, and that is that it was written in the form of a *dialogue*. And the omission to notice this one single fact has made a fair judgment upon the book itself and upon the man who wrote it very difficult, if not, indeed, impossible, and for the following reason.

The dialogue was a form of literary expression as customary in the fifteenth century as the novel is in our own. It arose directly out of the older form of scholastic disputation which had been the usual vehicle of instructed thought throughout the Middle

[1] *English Works*, p. 873 G. For the opinions of More's learned contemporaries on the book, see Erasmus's *Letters* of the year 1516, and also Thomas Stapleton's *Life of Sir Thomas More*, translated by Mgr. Hallett (Burns, Oates & Washbourne), pp. 32-34.

Ages and to which William James bids one go "when one wishes to find perfectly clear statement."[1] More himself was brought up on it; and it is of some interest to our own discussion to know exactly how it was carried on. When it took place in written form, the disputant upon any particular thesis first of all enumerated fairly, and at their full strength, the main objections to his own point of view. Then, having stated in general terms that he could not agree with them, he very carefully gave his own considered opinion as fully, but as concisely, as he was able. This done, he answered in turn each of the objections raised at the beginning of the discussion; and so brought it to an end.

Now the invention of printing brought many changes in its wake, and one of them was to make discussion on paper much easier, much lengthier and much more popular than ever before. And so in order to accommodate itself to changed circumstances the older type of scholastic disputation changed itself, as it were, into the dialogue form. Thus it happened that since the dialogue form, like the scholastic one immediately preceding it, exactly suited the purposes of those who wished to express

[1] *The Will to Believe*, p. 13.

themselves with accuracy, it was used by Sir Thomas More and by any of his contemporaries who wished to discuss in detail any opinions that might happen to attract their interest. It also had this further advantage that it enabled them to state their own opinions in quite clear and definite contradistinction to those from which they differed; and to do it under their own names. Hence we find that among More's writings we have, first, the *Utopia*, in which he uses the dialogue form to reveal political and social theories, then, the *Dialogue Concerning Tyndale*, in which he examines the religious opinions of the reformers, and, finally, the *Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, written when he was imprisoned in the Tower of London in order to fortify his reasonable soul against the miseries of close confinement and the onset of death itself.

It is true, of course, that in every discussion there must always be a common ground as well as a ground of difference between the disputants; and it is only where the differences grow to a crucial point that such very careful distinctions as More makes under his own name both in the *Utopia* and in his *Dialogue Concerning Tyndale* are necessary. It is only fair, then, to More that we should regard

these distinctions of his as carefully as he did; for only thus can he be understood in his own sense. And this is as necessary in reading the *Utopia* as it is in studying the *Dialogue Concerning Tyndale*; for in the one he as accurately foreshadows, and as clearly differs from, the political opinions of Marx and Lenin as, in the other, he fully states, and as fairly answers, the religious arguments of Tyndale and Luther.

We may also remember Sir James Mackintosh's caution against putting the seal of More's own approval upon everything written down in the *Utopia*; for there we find "such a variety of doctrines" and "such a multiplicity of projects that severally he must have regarded them through every degree and shadow of difference from strong disapproval at the one extreme to stern disapprobation at the other." More was a great jester and, like Lewis Carroll, he was as clear-headed when jesting as when he was not—but not as serious. Yet, although this is so, we are left in no manner of doubt as to the social doctrines and principles which he himself held to be most true and important, since throughout the whole Utopian dialogue he is as careful to express them under his own name and so to distinguish them from others from which he

disagreed, coming for the most part from the mouth of Raphael Hythloday, his chief interlocutor.

The *Utopia* is its own best evidence that it was written at a time of quickening change, discovery and reassessment in the general life of our Western civilisation, and also, indeed, at a period in More's own life when as undoubtedly the most brilliant layman of his generation he was entering into a well-won inheritance of self-knowledge, responsibility and power. And in it we see him engaged in a splendid effort of discriminating choice, disentangling the " good life " from a life only speciously good and building up his pre-considered future upon the choices there made. In the *Utopia*, too, we can see his discriminations to be already those of a man of tried experience in the commercial and agrarian, in the foreign and domestic problems of the day, and not only in these but also in the less immediate but no less important problems of his age, such as the relations of the individual to the institution of the family and to the civic and religious life of a well-ordered State. And while admitting all these necessarily absorbing claims upon the natural life of the civilised man, he admits, nay he asserts, that there are other and even higher claims upon him, namely, those of the supernatural life, claims that

to-day many are not so willing to admit. For More was a great lover of hospitality, and as much in the things of the mind and the spirit as in those of bodily necessity. This trait of his character is impressed upon every page of the *Utopia*, wherein he refuses entertainment to no idea that can claim the consideration of a reasonable man. And it was as characteristic of him in his later as in his earlier years. In 1529, in the midst of all the religious turmoil caused by the Lutheran teachings, there were those of his own faith, though, as he tells us, not the most influential, who feared the issue even of an authorised vernacular translation of the New Testament. "That fear," he wrote, "nothing feareth me; but whosoever would of their malice and folly take harm of that thing that is of itself ordained to do all men good, I would never, for the avoiding of their harm, take from other [people] the profit which they might take, and nothing deserve to lose. For else, if the abuse of a good thing should cause the taking away thereof from another that would use it well, Christ should himself have never been born."[1] And this was surely because More believed this life, at its best, to be a reasonable life, and for the sufficient reason that there was Reason behind it. He also

[1] *The Dialogue Concerning Tyndale*, iii. c. 16, pp. 243-257.

believed that, at its best, it was a merry life, and that all good people should be merry too—merry while here on earth, and, as he himself put it in the very last letter he ever wrote, destined hereafter " merrily to meet in heaven."[1]

The circumstances which led to the writing of the *Utopia* are of interest. In 1495, when More was but eighteen years old, Henry VII had entered into a commercial treaty with the Netherlands called the *Magnus Intercursus*. In 1506, the Prince of the Netherlands, Philip of Castile, the nephew of Katherine of Aragon, who afterwards became King of Spain and then the Emperor Charles V, was unfortunate enough to be wrecked on the English coast; and Henry VII availed himself of a favourable opportunity to renew the *Magnus Intercursus* and revise it at the same time, presumably in his own favour, as henceforth it became known to the Flemings, who were the other contracting party, as the *Intercursus Malus*. By 1515, therefore, there was need of still further revision; and an English embassy consisting of Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of Durham, Richard Sampson, Wolsey's vicar at Tournai, John Clifford, the Governor of the English merchants residing in Bruges, and " Young

[1] *The Last Letters of Sir Thomas More*, p. 119.

More," as he was still called to distinguish him from his father the judge. Professor A. W. Reed [1] points out that Clifford's official residence at Bruges had previously been occupied by William Caxton when holding the same office, and he had lived there for some years before entering into the service of Margaret of Burgundy and took up printing. More, on this embassy, as under-sheriff of London and in the full tide of professional work, was the representative, not of the King but of the business men of the City of London. The negotiations were of so difficult and tedious a nature that More writing to his friend, Erasmus, tells him that what he hoped could have been done in two months took more than six to accomplish, and accomplish successfully. And this kept him away from England very much against his will from the early summer of 1515 until the February of the following year. He writes also that his allowance, though sufficient to feed him abroad, is not sufficient for the maintenance of his family at home, since, alas, he cannot persuade them to fast in his absence. But even in his enforced and lengthened exile there were consolations—indeed, he tells us, there were some things that greatly

[1] *Utopia*, Sir Thomas More, edited by A. W. Reed (Golden Cockerel Press), p. vi.

delighted him. "First, the living so long and so continually with Tunstall, a man who while he is surpassed by none in culture and strictness of life, is also unequalled in the pleasantness of his demeanour. Next (he writes) I have acquired the friendship of Busleiden, who received me with a magnificence proportionate to his great riches, and a cordiality in keeping with the goodness of his soul. He showed me his house, so marvellously built and so splendidly furnished, and so many antiquities, in which you, Erasmus, know my curiosity and delight; and above all his library is so well filled and his mind more richly stored than his library.... But in my travels nothing was more to my heart's content than my intercourse with Peter Aegidius [or Giles] of Antwerp, a man so learned, so witty, so modest, and so true a friend, that I would willingly part with a good share of my fortune to purchase his company." The name of Peter Giles introduces a very pleasant interlude to More's tedious embassy; for while the negotiations were held up at Bruges to await further instructions from the principals at home, More was able to escape to Antwerp. Of his stay there and what came out of it we know from the *Utopia* itself, which is dedicated to Peter Giles, no doubt in happy recollection of the

stimulus towards its production More must have received while at Antwerp from the pleasant days and Attic nights he spent in the company of so charming and cultured a scholar. For we have only to look at the reproduction of his portrait by Quentin Metsys [1] to see for ourselves how intellectual, how humorous, and how very delightful a personality More must have found him to be. As Professor Reed surmises,[2] no doubt they talked of a world in which there were no money dealings, no property and no long-delayed negotiations to bring about treaties that were seldom kept. "One has only to read the history of the embassy . . . as it is set out in the *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*, to appreciate the mood in which the *Utopia* was conceived; and one has only to read the *Utopia* to know what More, Giles, Erasmus and their humanist friends were thinking of the French occupation of Milan, the English occupation of Tournay, the employment of Swiss and German mercenaries and the Machiavellian character of the new European statesmanship."

[1] One is thinking, of course, of the beautiful reproduction of Quentin Metsys' diptych, in which we have the portrait not only of Peter Giles but also of Erasmus, painted, as we know, for presentation to More himself, and given to us in that great work of scholarship, *Erasmi Epistolae*, ed. P. S. Allen, ii, facing p. 576.

[2] A. W. Reed, *op. cit.* p. vi.

And now to the book itself and its chief but fictitious character Raphael Hythloday, to whom More and Peter Giles shall introduce us.

While I was at Antwerp (More writes), among many that visited me, there was one that was more acceptable to me than any other—Peter Giles, born at Antwerp, who is a man of great honour and good rank in his town; for I do not know if there be anywhere to be found a more learned and a better bred young man. . . . One day, as I was returning home from Mass at Antwerp, I saw him by accident talking with a stranger that seemed past the flower of his age; his face was tanned, he had a long beard, and his cloak was hanging carelessly about him, so that by his looks and habit I concluded he was a seaman. As soon as Peter saw me he came and saluted me; and as I was returning his civility, he took me aside, and pointing to him with whom he had been discoursing, he said:

"Do you see that man? I was just thinking of bringing him to you." I answered, "He should have been very welcome on your account." "And on his own too," replied he, "if you knew the man; for there is none alive that can give you so copious an account of unknown nations and countries as he can do; which I know you very much desire." "Then," said I, "I did not guess amiss; for at first sight I took him for a seaman." "But you are as much mistaken," said he, "for he has not sailed as a seaman, but as a traveller, or rather as a philosopher; for this Raphael, who from his family carries the name of Hythloday, as he is not ignorant of

the Latin tongue, so he is eminently learned in Greek, having applied himself more particularly to that than to the former, because he has given himself much to philosophy, in which he knew that the Romans have left us nothing that is valuable except what is to be found in Seneca and Cicero."

Here, for the first time, we make the acquaintance of Raphael Hythloday, the principal speaker throughout the *Utopia* dialogue. He is a great traveller, not only in time and space, but also in ideas ; and as his immediate interest is to discover new places and peoples and civilisations, so his chief intellectual preoccupation is to compare them with the peoples and places and culture of the older European world, not omitting to study their natural religions and to contrast them with the supernatural revelation of Christianity.

More, Hythloday and Peter Giles engaged in pleasant conversation, now make their way to More's own house, and, having arrived there, go out into the garden, seat themselves on a green bank and entertain one another with serious discourse.

We may recollect that at this time Henry VIII was doing his powerful best to attract More into political and court life ; and no doubt More's own leisure moments at Antwerp were largely occupied

in debating within himself the pros and cons of this difficult, absorbing, not to say dangerous, way of life. We are not surprised, then, that in discourse with Hythloday, we find him going over from different points of view the very questions that before long he might be bound to answer and take action upon. Could a philosopher be of any service to a king? Could a man bent on practical reforms that would bring about widespread social betterment look for anything but sad disillusionment when he tried to impress his views upon headstrong princes or selfish courtiers? Was hanging the best cure for thieves and vagabonds? And so on, and so forth.

Within the pleasant framework of so delightful a fantasy, we find More and Peter Giles trying to persuade Raphael Hythloday to put the varied knowledge and practical experience of men which he has gained in travel at the disposal of some powerful prince. But Hythloday thinks it unreasonable of them to ask him for their sakes to enslave himself to any prince whatsoever. Upon which More replies:

> I perceive, Raphael, that you desire neither wealth nor greatness; and indeed I value and admire such a man more than I do any of the great men in the world. Yet I think you would do a thing well becoming so

generous and philosophical a soul as yours is, if you would apply time and thought to public affairs, even though you may happen to find that a little uneasy to yourself; and this you can never do with so much advantage as by being taken into the council of some great prince, and by setting him on to noble and worthy things, which I know you would do if you were in such a post; for the springs of both good and evil flow over a whole nation, from the prince as from a lasting fountain.

Hythloday still objects, holding that princes are generally more set on acquiring new kingdoms than on governing well those that they have already. Courtiers, too, take it ill if any man sets out to be wiser than they; and although they willingly let go all the good things that were done in former ages, yet, if better things are proposed, they cover themselves obstinately with the excuse of reverence to the past. "I have met with these proud, morose and absurd judgments of things in many places, particularly once in England." Hythloday has the keenest eye for political abuses and for the shortcomings of princes and politicians who, refusing to redress crying social grievances, prefer to leave them unredressed in order to keep the people in their "proper place," that is, in a condition of miserable and poverty-stricken subjection.

" There are those," says Hythloday, " who think that it is to the prince's interest that there should be as little private property as possible left in the hands of ordinary people ; and that they should have neither riches nor liberty ; since these things make them less submissive and subservient to a cruel and unjust government ; whereas necessity and poverty blunts them, makes them patient, and bears them down and breaks their height of spirit, and takes away from them any disposition to rebel." [1]

" Now what would happen," Hythloday goes on, " if I should assert that such councils were both unbecoming to a king, and mischievous to him, and that not only his honour but his safety consisted more in his people's well-being than in his own ; . . . and that a prince, like a shepherd, is to take more care of his flock than of himself."

" It is also certain that they are much mistaken who think that the poverty of a nation is a means to public safety. Who quarrel more than beggars do ? Who more earnestly longs for change than he who is in miserable circumstances ? And who are so ready to run to revolution as those who, having nothing to lose, hope to gain by it ? . . . *He that can find no other way for correcting the errors of his people*

[1] See Aristotle, *Politics*, v. viii.

but by taking from them the conveniences of daily life, shows that he knows not what it is to govern a free nation."

Hythloday then adds some advice to princes. "Let the prince live upon what belongs to himself, without wronging others, and accommodate his expense to his revenue.[1] Let him punish crimes"—notice that Hythloday advises punishment—"but let him endeavour by his wise conduct to prevent them rather than be severe on those who have been made criminal by his own bad government. Let him not rashly revive laws that have fallen into disuse; and that have been long forgotten and never wanted."[2]

And having said all this, we can see our seafaring philosopher, Hythloday, turning to More, with a rather wicked twinkle in his eye, and asking him what chance such an out-and-out social reformer as he would have of becoming at all acceptable to any princes then reigning in Europe. "How deaf would they be," says he, "to all my good political advice!"

"No doubt they would," answers More, "and no wonder." "What you have said," continues More, "is all very well in a friendly discussion; but there is no place for it in the court of princes where great affairs are carried on by authority."

[1] This was not Henry VIII's strong point.

[2] This, too, was one of Henry VIII's little weaknesses.

More's meaning is clear, as if he said : " People do not talk as you have done when every word spoken results in action, and action taken under a sobering sense of personal and moral responsibility for the good of the State."

To this Hythloday answers in rather blunt fashion :

" There is no room for philosophy in the courts of princes."

" Yes, there is," replies More, " but not for a speculative philosophy that makes everything to be alike fitting at all times. But there is another philosophy that is more pliable, that knows its proper scene, and accommodates itself to it ; and that teaches a man to act that part which has fallen to his share fitly and decently. If when one of Plautus's comedies is upon the stage, and a company of servants are acting their parts, you should come out in the garb of a philosopher, and repeat, out of Octavia, a discourse of Seneca's to Nero, had it not been better for you to have said nothing, than by mixing things of such different natures, to have made such an impertinent tragi-comedy ? For you spoil and corrupt the play in hand, when you mix it with things disagreeing to it, even though they were better than it is : therefore go through with the play that is acting the best you can ; and do not confound it, because another that is pleasanter comes into your thoughts. It is even so in a commonwealth, and in the council of princes. If ill opinions cannot be quite rooted out, and if you cannot

cure some received vices according to your wishes, you must not therefore abandon the ship in a storm, because you cannot command the winds; nor ought you to assault people with discourses that are out of their road, when you see their notions are such that you can make no impression on them; but you ought to cast about, and as far as you can manage things dexterously, that so if you cannot make matters go well, they may go as little ill as possible. For except all men were good, all things cannot go well: which I do not hope to see in a great while."

At this point, as we see, More defines, under his own name, his difference from Hythloday on matters both of political philosophy and of political procedure.

CHAPTER TWO

WHEN More in the last chapter puts forward in contradistinction to Hythloday what he considers to be the only practical procedure for anyone entering seriously into the responsibilities of political life, he reminds us of a book which the late Lord Morley wrote, a good many years ago, *On Compromise*; for both writers plead for the same thing—balance and discretion in politics.

In ordinary family life it is easy to see that, if there is to be a cosmos and not a chaos, there must be unity as well as liberty, and that these two qualities are there interdependent and cannot exist the one without the other. But what is true on a smaller scale in the family is just as true on a larger one in those great social units we name the Church and the State. And the reason for it is that in every change for the better there must always be an abiding basis of stability able to endure, sustain, bring forth and firmly establish that change. Because we have liberty we can change; but only

when we have unity as well can we change for the better, change that is towards life and not towards death.

And this is the simple but balanced truth that More upheld, in his own time, at the cost of his life, and in our time, at the cost of his reputation with those who while believing in liberty forgot to believe in unity as well.

But, at the same time, as Catholics we need to remind ourselves that unity no less than liberty often suffers from a one-sided championship—a championship that through a narrow and misguided zeal may become hard, compulsory and external, unloving, unyielding and intrusive. But such never comes from a consciousness of unity at its best, which is always gentle in proportion to its real supernatural strength.

There are many who, not knowing the value of true unity, are unwilling to pay its lawful price, which is obedience—the reasonable obedience of the part to the whole, of the member to the body, of the body to its head, of the creature, man, to his Creator, God.

Catholics are sometimes pitied because they have to be obedient, as if obedience in a reasonable being were a shameful thing, something that

no reasonable man should give to the God of Reason. But obedience is a virtue the more valuable on account of its difficulty, especially in its earlier stages. For the first real attempts at true obedience are made against the tide of our natural desires, whether of body or mind. St. Augustine cries out to God with a splendid frankness in the first agony of his moral conversion, "Give me chastity and continence; but not yet.... Presently, presently, let me have a little while!"[1] But he persevered in failure, or rather in slow but sure success, until at last, to use More's own words, "the field was won." And as in his moral, so in his intellectual conversion, as those who read his *Confessions* will readily agree. Quite contrary, then, to the opinion of those who think that freedom and obedience are imcompatible, the truth is that only those are really free who are really obedient; and they have as the reward of their obedience the freedom of the Body of Christ.

But to go back to Raphael Hythloday and Master More, we may say that in the Utopian dialogue, Hythloday plays, by More's intention, a very individual part; for he is one of those who has dreamt

[1] *Confessions*, trans. C. Bigg, D.D. (Methuen), Bk. viii. cc. 5 and 7.

his own dream of social perfection, the prototype of the kind of man, not rare even now, who wants everybody else to play the great game of life according to *his* rules and not according to the rules of the game and of Him Who has made both them and us. But of these Hythloday was not very well informed. His ignorance, however, did not prevent him from very cleverly borrowing ideas both new and old on a very generous scale and fashioning them to a brilliant plan of his own conception which left out nothing but the most stubborn facts of human nature. And so, at the end of the discussion, More, very quietly but none the less definitely, turns down his plan as being unworkable in this workaday world. "Meanwhile," he concludes, "as I cannot give my assent to all the things that he [Hythloday] said, I confess the more easily that there are many things in the Utopian weal public which in our cities I may rather wish for than hope after." [1] More's own hopes were at once too low and too high for Hythloday—too low, because as a modest-minded man he knew in himself the weak-

[1] Cf. More's original Latin (Louvain, 1566): Interea quemadmodum haud possum omnibus assentiri quae dicta sunt, alioqui ab homine citra controversiam eruditissimo, simul et rerum humanarum peritissimo, ita facile confiteor permulta esse in Utopiensium Republica, quae in nostris civitatibus optarim verius, quam sperarim.

nesses common to mankind ; and too high, because having a strong supernatural faith, he believed that God could make things possible to men that were impossible to them in their naturally imperfect state. In a sentence, he believed that only by means of grace could nature again become itself.

We see, therefore, that while More and Hythloday are at one in their protest against political and social injustice, they differ considerably in their ways of attacking it.

It has been held by some that Raphael Hythloday was More's *alter ego*, and even his better *ego*. But it would be fairer to say that he was what More might have been but for the grace of God. For the Hythloday disclosed to us in the *Utopia* is what More never was, a sturdy individualist and the forerunner of a race that has done many good things in our country during the last four centuries, and has even overdone them ; a race whose characteristic ability has been to lay down the law, a new law and their own. And the law that Hythloday himself laid down with great sternness and precision, for others to keep, was his own brand of State Communism in which the State was everything and the individuals composing it hardly anything at all. This seems at first sight paradoxical, but on reflection

it is only what might be expected; for when sheer individualism gets into the saddle the fallacy it falls into is to make its own laws for other people to keep, instead of decently joining in with them in a common attempt to keep God's law. Hythloday, although endowed with a trenchant originality both on the critical and on the constructive side, was, as he confessed himself to be, an Ishmaelite of the Ishmaelites, a man who may not unfairly be described as impatient, presumptuous, inexperienced and unbalanced in judgment; and that in spite of (or was it rather because of?) his adventurous journey to Nowhere. More, on the other hand, as his biographers tell us, had learnt self-discipline in some good and very severe schools of experience. He was therefore at closer grips with real life and solid virtue than his Utopian *alter ego*, if such in fairness to himself we may call the character he has so carefully portrayed.

There are many words in our language which have suffered a change of meaning since Tudor times. Words that were then honoured by honourable men have since come into dishonour; and one of them is the one that will best describe the chief difference of character between Hythloday and More. More had what Hythloday had not, personal

humility. And because the word has changed its meaning so much for his countrymen since More's own day, it may be well to define it afresh. "Humility," writes St. Thomas Aquinas, "is that virtue which restrains the appetite from aiming at great things against right reason." And then, in order to balance it, he continues, "A two-fold virtue is necessary with regard to the difficult good: one, to temper and restrain the mind, lest it tend to high things immoderately, and that is *humility*: and another is needed to strengthen the mind against despair, and urge it on to the pursuit of great things according to right reason, and that is *magnanimity*." [1]

If Hythloday was meant to be More's *alter ego*, which is more than doubtful, it can hardly be claimed that he was his better *ego*; for, in spite of his versatile genius, he lacked the qualities of experienced manhood: he had neither More's humility nor his magnanimity, he had less balance, less sense of the true and fitting and possible and proportionate, and, finally, much less common sense.

While admitting, then, that More's own philosophy was different from that of Raphael Hythloday, and his sense both of the natural and of the supernatural orders of life more profound, yet, looked at

[1] *Summa*, II. ii. Q. 161, art. 1.

from a literary standpoint their differing personalities are but the polar parts of a work of unusual genius. More probably just wanted to express to himself rather than to others, or, if to others, only to a circle of chosen and brilliant friends, the thoughts and notions that were then passing through his mind about Europe in general and England in particular, as he looked at them both in fact and fantasy and from so many different but very pleasing points of view. He was about to go into serious politics himself, and wisely he took stock of what was and was not, and even of what might never be.

We may recall to our own minds what William Morris wrote about More as an introduction to the very fine edition of the *Utopia* he printed at his Kelmscott Press. " It seems to me," he says, " that the value of the *Utopia* as a book for the study of sociology is rather historic than prophetic; and that we should look upon it as a link between the surviving Communism of the Middle Ages (becoming hopeless in More's time and doomed to be soon wholly effaced by the advancing wave of Commercial Bureaucracy) and the hopeful and practical progressive movement of to-day. In fact, I think that More must be looked upon as the last of the old rather than as the first of the new. Apart from

what was yet alive in him of mediaeval communist tradition, the spirit of association, which amongst other things produced the guilds, and which, in the monastic orders, was strong in the mediaeval Church itself, other influences were at work to make him take up a parable against the new spirit of the age. The action of the period of transition from mediaeval to commercial society, with all its brutalities, was before his eyes; though he was not alone in his time in condemning the injustice of the revolution which destroyed the peasant life of England, and turned it into a grazing farm for the moneyed gentry; creating withal, at one stroke, the propertyless wage-earner and the masterless vagrant. Yet he saw deeper into its roots and causes than any other man of his own day, and left us little to add to his views on this point except a reasonable hope that those causes will yield to a better form of society before long."

But before we turn to the details of the book, let us appeal to the disinterested historical judgment of the best-informed and the most reliable of our own historians [1] of the earlier period in which More then lived and wrote.

The wit and humour of More [as we find it in the *Utopia*] is that of the thoughtful observant Englishman,

[1] Brewer, *Reign of Henry VIII*, vol. i. pp. 288-292.

not breaking into peals of laughter [like Rabelais], but so quiet, sedate, and serious as to demand on the part of the reader something of the same habit of quiet thought and observation, to be fully perceived and enjoyed. More hovers so perpetually on the confines of jest and earnest, passes so naturally from the one to the other, that the reader is in constant suspense whether his jest be serious, or his seriousness a jest. The book is wonderfully English-like; wonderfully like that balancing habit of mind which trembles on the verge of right and wrong, sometimes struggling on in happier times to clearer vision, sometimes, like More, shutting its eyes and relapsing into older impressions, unable to endure suspense any longer.

In More's own day the *Utopia* was regarded as a mirror of the political and social evils of the times. "A burgomaster of Antwerp," writes Erasmus, "is so pleased with it, he knows it all by heart." [1] Its popularity is attested by numerous editions and translations. The scene of it is laid in the then scarce-known regions of the west, where Christianity had not yet penetrated. It describes the social and political perfection to which the people of Utopia had arrived by the mere efforts of natural goodness, as compared with the corrupt institutions and manners of Christendom. The Utopians are not entirely free from usages which seem incompatible with a model republic, and this is part of the author's design. They attempt to prevent war by assassination, and bribe the subjects of their enemy to commit treason. But he must be dull indeed, who does not perceive that

[1] *L. & P.* ii. 2962, 2996.

the *Utopia* when following these principles, is removed but a few miles from the English Channel, and that a practice which seems more odious in these upright and wise Utopians was ten-fold more unjustifiable in those who, professing the doctrines of Christ, never scrupled to employ the same means against their own enemies. Were the intrigues of Henry VIII and his minister Dacre against Scotland more moral than these? Letter after letter in this volume betrays a similar design for decoying or cutting off *The White Rose*, De la Pole, thus illustrating More's words to the letter: "By this means it has often fallen out that many of them, even the Prince himself, has been betrayed by those in whom they trusted most; for the rewards the Utopians offer are so immeasurably great that there is no sort of crime to which men cannot be drawn by them."

But Utopia is nowhere, and was never intended to be set up as a model to be literally followed.... But though the Utopia was not to be literally followed... it might serve to show to a corrupt Christendom what good could be effected by the natural instincts of men when following the dictates of natural prudence and justice. If kings could never be elective in Europe, Utopia might teach men how great was the benefit to society when the State regarded itself as created for the well-being of all, and not of a class or a favoured few. Literally property could never be common except in Utopia; but it might be so in effect in Christian communities when property and capital were more widely diffused—when the enormous disproportion between the poor and the rich, the noble and the serf, was

modified by social improvements—when laws were simplified, and the statute book disencumbered of obsolete and unintelligible Acts, too often put in force to catch the unwary, and made an instrument of oppression by the crown lawyers.

It might, perhaps, be thought that More [when speaking through the mouth of Raphael Hythloday] attributed too much to nature—that in the misery and confusion of his times, in the deadlock of all social, political, and religious reforms, in his dissatisfaction at Christianity, as exhibited in the lives of his contemporaries, he gladly turned away to an ideal as little like reality as possible, and pleased himself, as some did at the French Revolution, with a pure social abstraction removed from all those debasing influences under which men groaned. We might be tempted to think that for a moment [and again in the character of Raphael Hythloday] he wavered in his allegiance to Christianity, and that the beautiful visions of Platonic republics and ancient patriots, fostered by his classical studies, had for a time overmastered his imagination, as was the case with many others.[1] Christianity, in his days at least, could present no such heroical virtue, no such grace or beauty, as Paganism had done, and was then doing, with an intensity of attraction to the newly-awakened longings of men, of which we can form no conception. Were monks and friars comparable to the ancient philosopher and

[1] Cf. Bishop Butler in his *Analogy*, who speaks of the imagination as "that forward delusive faculty ever intruding beyond its sphere." He is also against Utopia-making, which he describes as "an idle and not very innocent employment." Chap. i. p. 43; and Introd. p. 32.

his supper of herbs? Were Christian kings of the sixteenth century—imperious, headstrong, passionate, and arbitrary, immersed in the games of war and ambition, absorbed by the tournament or the chase, impatient of contradiction, deaf to good advice—comparable to the Catos, the Reguli, the Spartan or Sabine rulers of the old republics? Had not the advancement of the faith been made a pretext for spoliation and aggrandizement? Had not its teachers taken part rather with the oppressors than the oppressed? Were not half the wars of Christendom traceable to this one cause?—ignoble wars that only fostered the evils under which society laboured, strengthening the oppressor and trampling on the weak. Had More's faith staggered at the trial, it could have occasioned little surprise; but apparently it did not. For Christianity is introduced among the Utopians; it is readily received by them from its secret sympathy with their own opinions and institutions in its purer form.[1]

But a very brief sketch of the Utopian political and social regulations will point out more clearly the prevalent evils of More's days . . . the endless wars, the faithless leagues, the military expenditure, the money and time wasted upon instruments and means of offence to the neglect of all social improvements, unsettled habits, trains of idle serving-men re-enacting in the streets the interminable brawls of the Montagues and Capulets, broken and disabled soldiers turning to theft, and filling Alsatia for lack of employment, labour disarranged, husbandry broken up, villages and hamlets

[1] *Utopia*, ii. p. 172.

depopulated to feed sheep, agricultural labourers turned adrift, but forbidden to stray, and driven home from tithing to tithing by the lash, to starve; no poorhouses, no hospitals, though the sweating sickness raged through the land, but the poor left to perish as paupers by the side of the ditches, filling the air with fever and pestilence; houses never swept or ventilated, choked with rotten thatch above and unchanged rushes within, streets reeking with offal and filthy puddles, no adequate supply of water for cleanliness or health, penal laws stringently enforced, more stringently as the evils grew greater, crime and its punishment struggling for the upper hand, justice proud of its executions, and wondering that theft multiplied faster than the gibbet.

It is preferable to have, in words other than one's own, so terrible a summary of the political and social conditions of our country at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and which, as realised by More himself, we have also recorded in the *Utopia*, when, certainly not from personal preference, he was about to enter into high political service at the Court of Henry VIII, whom in the very first words of the *Utopia* he calls "the unconquered king of England, a prince adorned with all the virtues that become a great monarch."

To go back to More's introductory talk with Raphael Hythloday, who by birth is a Portuguese, he asks him whether he was ever in England. He

answers that he was there for some months, just after the Cornish Rebellion of 1497, when the men of Cornwall led by Lord Audley had marched to Blackheath and had been defeated " with a great slaughter of the poor people who had engaged in it, to the number of two thousand and more."

" I was then (he continues) much obliged to that reverend prelate, John Morton, archbishop of Canterbury, cardinal, and chancellor of England, a man that was not less venerable for his wisdom and virtues, than for the high character he bore. . . . "

One day (says Hythloday) when I was dining with Cardinal Morton, there happened to be at table one of the English lawyers, who took occasion to run out in high commendation of the severe execution of justice upon thieves, who, as he said, were then hanged so fast, that there were sometimes twenty on one gibbet; and upon that the Cardinal said that he wondered how it came to pass, that since so few escaped, there were yet so many thieves who were still robbing in all places.

Upon this, I [Raphael Hythloday] took the boldness to speak freely before the Cardinal, and said there was no reason to wonder at the matter, since this way of punishing thieves was neither just in itself nor good for the public; for as the severity was too great, so the remedy was not effectual; *simple theft not being so great a crime, that it ought to cost a man his life*; and no punishment

how severe so ever, being able to restrain those from robbing who can find no other way of livelihood; and in this, said I, not only you in England, but a great part of the world imitate some ill masters that are readier to chastise their scholars, than to teach them. There are dreadful punishments enacted against thieves, but it were much better to make such good provisions, by which every man might be put in a method how to live, and so be preserved from the fatal necessity of stealing and dying for it.

The Cardinal suggests that there are handicrafts and husbandry by which such unemployed and thieving vagabonds may get a living if they choose. Hythloday objects that most of them have served in civil and foreign wars, therefore are unfitted by mutilation in the service of their king and country to follow their old trades or are too old to learn new ones. But while wars, he says, are occasional, there are deeper and more permanent causes of vagabondage and unemployment.

There is a great number of noblemen among you, that live not only idle themselves as drones, subsisting by other men's labours, who are their tenants, and whom they pare to the quick, and thereby raise their revenues; this being the only instance of their frugality, for in all other things they are prodigal, even to the beggaring of themselves: but besides this, they carry about with them a large number of idle fellows, who

never learned any art by which they may gain their living : and these, as soon as their lord dies, or themselves fall sick, are turned out of doors ; for your lords are readier to feed idle people, than to take care of the sick ; and oftener the heir is not able to keep together so great a family as the predecessor did. Now when the stomachs of those that are thus turned out of doors, grow keen, they rob no less keenly ; and what else can they do ? for, after that, by wandering about, they have worn out both their health and their clothes, and are tattered, and look ghastly, men of quality will not entertain them, and poor men dare not do it ; knowing that one who had been bred up to idleness and pleasure, and who was used to walk about with his sword and buckler, despising all the neighbourhood with insolent scorn, as far below him, is not fit for the spade and mattock : nor will he serve a poor man for so small a hire, and in so low a diet as he can afford.

The Cardinal, finding Hythloday in so serious a mood, can't resist the temptation to a little leg-pulling, and suggests to Hythloday that these are just the kind of men to make excellent army recruits of, " since their birth inspires them with a nobler sense of honour than is to be found among tradesmen or ploughmen."

But Hythloday, though just as witty as the Cardinal, indulges in a different kind of wit, and makes a reply as bitter in its thrust as a rapier point :

You may as well say that you must cherish thieves on account of wars, for you will never want the one, as long as you have the other; and as robbers prove sometimes gallant soldiers, so soldiers prove often brave robbers; so near an alliance is there between those two sorts of life.

But this bad custom of keeping so many servants, that is so common among you, is not peculiar to this nation. In France there is yet a more pestiferous sort of people, for the whole country is full of soldiers, that are still kept up in time of peace.

We are now called upon to consider the evil of standing armies.

These men (he continues) are kept in pay upon the same account that you plead for those idle retainers about noblemen: this being a maxim of those pretended statesmen, that it is necessary for the public safety to have a good body of veteran soldiers ever in readiness. They think that raw men are not to be depended upon, and they sometimes seek occasions for making war, that they may train up their soldiers in the art of cutting throats, or as Sallust observed, for keeping their hands in. But France has learned to its cost how dangerous it is to feed such beasts. The fate of the Romans, Carthaginians, and Syrians, and many other nations and cities, which were overturned and quite ruined by standing armies, should make other nations wiser.[1]

[1] *U.* ii. pp. 28-30.

There is a very modern ring about such arguments as these, and we almost expect our intrepid Raphael to bring up the question of conscription. But " progress " on the military side of our civilization had not then reached the high-water mark of conscription. Erasmus, indeed, was all against " progress " in this matter ; for in 1517 he published his *Complaint of Peace*. Lord Hugh Cecil must have been thinking of the *Querela Pacis* when in 1916, lecturing on *Christianity and War*, he said " that if the Reformation could have been guided by a man like Erasmus rather than by Luther and Calvin, and if the unity of Christendom could have been preserved consistently with its purification from many evils, the gain to Christians would have been enormous." [1]

It seems very unreasonable (he concludes) that for the prospect of war, which you need never have but when you please, you should maintain so many idle men, who will even disturb you in times of peace.

But I do not think that this necessity of stealing arises only from this cause ; for there is another that is more special to England.

What is that ? (said the Cardinal).

The increase of pasture (replies Hythloday) by which your sheep, which are naturally mild and easily kept in

[1] Quotation from *The Times*, August 12, 1916.

order, are said to devour men : for wherever it is found that the sheep of any soil yield a softer and richer wool than ordinary, there the nobility and gentry, and even those holy men the abbots, not contented with the old rents which their farms yielded, nor thinking it enough that they are living at their ease, do no good to the public, resolve to do it hurt. They stop the course of agriculture, enclose grounds, and destroy houses and towns, reserving only the churches, that they may lodge their sheep in them : as if forests and parks had swallowed up too little soil, those worthy countrymen turn the best inhabited places into solitudes ; for when any unsatiable wretch, who is a plague to his country, resolves to enclose many thousand acres of ground, the owners as well as tenants are turned out of their possessions by tricks, or by main force, or being wearied out with ill-usage, they are forced to sell them. So these miserable people, both men and women, married, unmarried, old and young, with their poor but numerous families, since country business requires many hands, are all forced to change their seats, not knowing whither to go ; and they must sell for almost nothing their household stuff, which could not bring them much money, even though they might stay for a buyer. When that little money is at an end, for it will soon be spent, what is left for them to do, but either to steal and so be hanged, God knows how justly, or to go about and beg. And if they do this, they are put in prison as idle vagabonds ; whereas they would willingly work, but can find none that will hire them ; for there is no more occasion for country labour, to which they have been

bred, when there is no arable land left. One shepherd can look after a flock, which will stock an extent of ground that would require many hands if it were ploughed and reaped. This likewise raises the price of corn in many places. The price of wool is also risen, that the poor people who were wont to make cloth, are no more able to buy it; and this likewise makes many of them idle. . . . And by these means, this your island, that seemed, as to this particular, the happiest in the world, will suffer much by the cursed avarice of a few persons.[1]

We may notice that Hythloday's argument is for the agricultural life as a whole and for the cultivation of arable as opposed to pasture land because it is better for the many poor; though, of course, pasture land, sheep "which devour men" and the enclosure of the commons is more "economic" in the modern sense because it makes for greater and more rapid profit on the part of the few who are rich and want to get richer. Also the cultivation of arable land encourages larger families, whereas sheep-farming with the pasture land tempts men to have very small families or no families at all. Here we have, as Mr. Tawney has pointed out,[2] the sharp contest between the older and the newer economics

[1] *U.* ii, pp. 31-35.

[2] *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, pp. 7 and 8.

and the evident triumph of the newer which is " nothing less than that secularisation of social and economic philosophy " which beginning in the sixteenth century, and running its course through the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is still with us, accompanied as always by the great problem of unemployment.

Mr. Tawney in his detailed study of this important problem, to which we owe his *Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century*, tells us that the changes here spoken of in the *Utopia* were small compared with what could be observed a hundred and fifty years later, say at the beginning of the Civil War in 1642, or again between 1702 and 1810 when two thousand six hundred Enclosure Acts were passed. Was More, then, making a fuss about nothing, or was he pointing with prophetic finger to the small but sad and certain beginnings of a great national change, not only upon the surface of our English soil but upon the mind and spirit of our countrymen as a whole? In More's time, he writes, it could still be said that three-fifths of the cultivated land of England was unenclosed. " And if Piers Plowman had dreamed for four centuries on Malvern Hills he might still have woken to plough his half acre between the balks of a still open field, like that

' very wide field ' with crooked ways butting upon it and a wicket-gate on its shining horizon through which Christian sped from Evangelist crying, ' Life, Life. Eternal Life.' "

Ought we then (he asks) to say that the agrarian revolution of the sixteenth century was insignificant, and that it has been magnified into importance only by the rhetorical complaints of unskilful observers? The fact that statistical evidence reveals no startling disturbance in area enclosed or population displaced, is no bar to the belief that, both in its immediate consequences and in ultimate effects, the heavy blows dealt in that age at the traditional organisation of agriculture was an episode of the first importance in economic and social development.... The difference between prosperity and distress, or enterprise and routine, or security and the opposite, is scarcely more susceptible of expression in figures than is the difference between civilisation and barbarism itself. In the infinite complexity of human relationships, with their interplay of law with economics, and of economics with politics, and of all with the shifting hopes and fears, baseless anticipations and futile regrets, of countless individuals, a change which, to the man of statistics concerned with quantities, seems insignificant, may turn a wheel whose motion sets a world of unseen forces grinding painfully round into new equilibrium.... The crude barbarities of tramp ward and workhouse were first struck out in the age when most of those who tramped and toiled, who sat in the stocks and were whipped from town to town, were not the victims of

trade depression or casual employment, but peasants thrown on the market by the agrarian revolution.

For, in truth, the change which was coming upon the world in the guise of mere technical improvements was vaster than in their highest hopes, or their deepest despondency, the men of the Tudor age could have foreseen, and its immediate effects on the technique of agriculture and the standard of rural prosperity were but the tiny beginnings of movements whose origins are overshadowed by their tremendous consequences. It is a shallow view which has no interest to spare for the rivulet because it is not yet a river. Though many tributaries from many sources must converge before economic society assumes the shape that is recognisable as modern, it is none the less true that in the sixteenth century we are among the hills from which the great waters descend. By 1642, the channels which will carry some of them have been carved deep and sure. By that time the expansion of the woollen industry has made it certain that England will be a considerable manufacturing nation, and consequently that the ancient stable routine of subsistence farming will gradually give place to agricultural methods which swing this way and that, now towards pasture, now towards arable, according to the fluctuations of the market. It is certain that, sooner or later, the new and more profitable economy of enclosure will triumph. It is certain that, owing to the substitution of variable for fixed fines on admission to copyholds, and the conversion of many copyholds into leases for years, a great part of the fruits of economic progress will no longer be retained, as in the fifteenth

century, by the mass of the peasants, but will pass in the shape of increased payments for land, into the pockets of the great landed proprietors.[1]

The same writer adds that it was also almost certain that the peasants would be unable to offer anything like such a successful resistance to these new and oppressive developments as they had been able to do in the past. For the security which they had hitherto possessed had been undermined; the gulf which had in previous times been bridged by the existence of many prosperous freeholders had been widened; and above all, the destruction of the absolute monarchy [which itself had destroyed the restraining power of the Catholic Church] had placed the great landlords in an unassailable position at the heart of government, both central and local, where without let or hindrance they could gratify their increasing covetousness for territorial expansion and the further means that were necessary to its maintenance. "For a century and a half after the Revolution they have what power a government can have to make or ruin England as they please."

We are further told how the law was made to affect the situation; for in the period under review

[1] *Op. cit.* pp. 402-404.

men did not leave the land but were forced off it. Legal issues were invoked to give a decisive twist to the economic ones. The new agricultural methods were technically an advance in the utilisation of the soil, but a social revolution was brought about by the new insecurity of tenure which was forced upon large numbers of the peasantry, and without which they might slowly have adapted themselves to their changing conditions had not these been accompanied by new legal oppressions, by evictions and by the loss of their rights of common. It was not so much a grievance that economic causes had made a new kind of farming more profitable; but it was a grievance and not a very unjust one that the small people who had previously worked the old system should by legal devices be made much worse off than they had been before, although the new system was in itself so much more profitable.

Mr. Tawney's conclusion is so apposite, that in spite of previous quotations one is constrained to give it in his own well-weighed words:

> The breath of the coming commercial age was blowing through the land. The new world, which is painfully rising in so many English villages of the sixteenth century, is a tiny mirror of the new world which, on a

mightier stage, is ushering in modern history. The spirit which revolts against authority, frames a science that will subdue nature to its service, and thrust the walls of the universe asunder into space, is the same—we must not hesitate to say it—as that which on the lips of grasping landlords and stubborn peasants wrangles over the respective merits of " several " and " common," weighs the profits of *pasture* in an economic scale against the profits of *arable*, batters down immemorial custom, and, regarding neither the honour of God nor the welfare of this realm of England, brings the livings of many into the hands of one.

To the modern economist, who uses an ancient field map to trace the bewildering confusion of an open field village beneath the orderly lines of the dignified estate which lies upon it like a well-written manuscript on the crabbed scrawl of a palimpsest, the wastefulness of the old régime, compared with the productiveness of the new, may well seem too obvious to leave room for any discussion of their relative advantages; and indeed the accession of material wealth which followed the first feeble approach towards the methods of modern agriculture is unquestionable.

But the difference between such a standpoint and that of our peasants is not one of methods only but of objects, not of means but of ends.

We can imagine that to an exposition of the advantages of large-scale farming and enclosure, such as many stewards must have made to the juries of many manors, the peasants would have answered something after this fashion :

'True, our system *is* wasteful, and fruitful of many small disputes. True, a large estate can be managed more economically than a small one. True, pasture farming yields higher profits than tillage. Nevertheless, Master Steward, our wasteful husbandry feeds many households where your economical methods would feed few. In our ill-arranged fields and scrubby commons most families hold a share, though it be but a few roods. In our unenclosed village there are few rich, but there are few destitute, save when God sends a bad harvest and we all starve together. We do not like your improvements which ruin half the honest men affected by them. We do not choose that the ancient custom of our village should be changed!'[1]

So Hythloday was not very far wrong when, speaking of these same things, he said to Cardinal Morton: "Your island, that seemed as to this particular, the happiest in the world, will suffer much by the cursed avarice of a few persons."

For avarice has now become so much one of the politer vices that it is almost impolite to suggest that it still exists, and indeed is practised on no very small scale. But in spite of this, the rude, honest name of our most devastating social vice must be named among us, even if only by the unconsidered sparrows on the housetops whom it has deprived of their rightful crumbs; and God Himself, Who

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 409.

notices the sparrows when they fall, in the end and in the long run will not be unmindful of their complaints. Avarice is a vice more practised than compunction, and perhaps in our time even less understood for what it is. Nor is this surprising, seeing that throughout the Protestant centuries it has almost been consecrated as a virtue. Not many years ago a well-known Free Church capitalist proclaimed in accents of obvious piety that "it is the duty of every one of us to make money as it is our duty to worship God." [1] But taking account of the time and energy allotted to the first of these duties, the attempt to combine the two must have been almost impossible. Indeed we are told that it *is* impossible. At any rate St. Thomas Aquinas, who was so brilliantly careful to define his terms quite accurately, would hardly have agreed with the counsel of commercial perfection we have just quoted; for he tells us that the more deficient a man is the more he seeks relief in external things, and consequently gives way to avarice.[2] Avarice, then, according to his definition is the vice of the mentally deficient. He also calls it a capital vice because, in order to gratify it, men are led to

[1] *The New Age*, Jan. 27, 1916.
[2] *Summa*, ii. 2, Q. 118, art. 5.

commit other vices as well, namely, mercilessness, force, fraud, falsehood, perjury, restlessness, and even treachery, as was the case with Judas.[1]

And avarice in the first generation often becomes luxury in the second. What Henry VII over-accumulated, Henry VIII squandered, particularly in the years between 1515 and 1520, which culminated in the Field of Cloth of Gold. And this luxury in the well-to-do, as Hythloday tells us in almost his next sentence,[2] brought still greater poverty to the poorest of all.

But avarice, after all, is only an abuse of thrift, the most valuable economic virtue that any individual or society of individuals can possess, as More, when Hytholday is in danger of forgetting it at a later point in this dialogue,[1] is careful to point out. He never for a moment fell into the communistic fallacy that the abuse of thrift which used to be called avarice or covetousness, and is now called profiteering, furnishes any sound reason for the prevention of individual thriftiness by the abolition of private property. Thrift is the natural mainspring of wise production implanted in the nature of every normal human being, and, if cultivated without excess, it provides that sound material basis of

[1] *Summa*, ii. 2, Q. 118, art. 8. [2] *U.* p. 35.

everyday life without which no individual or family or State can, in the long run, thrive and prosper in the things more excellent.

Hythloday now adverts to the real cause of unemployment, vagabondage and theft, and the way to deal with them. Sops and doles are not enough, but " order that those who have dispeopled the soil may either rebuild the villages that they have pulled down or let their land to those who are willing to cultivate it. Let husbandry and tillage be restored again and the manufacture of wool be regulated so as to give work and the means of living to those who are idle themselves or the servants of those who are idle and will certainly in the end become thieves. If no remedy is found for such evils, it is a vain thing to boast of the severity with which theft is punished. The most fundamental remedy of all is education, education of the adequate, practical and proper sort; for if men are ill-educated and their manners corrupted from infancy, and afterwards are punished for the crimes to which their ill-education has disposed them, what else is to be concluded but that first you make thieves and then punish them."[1]

The Italians speak of a man as *ben educato*, meaning that he has had a good upbringing, some-

[1] *U.* i. pp. 37-38.

thing that requires all that a good mother and father, a good priest, a good schoolmaster, and a good apprenticeship can combine to give him. That was More's own best practical contribution to the education of his own day, which made him and the individual members of his family the pioneers of sound education not only in his own country but abroad. He was certain that if the foundations of intelligence and self-control, of real piety and practical occupation were laid aright, the individual and social and civic result could never be in doubt.[1] Looked at from the side of the State, it is better to fill the heads of the young with sound and practical instruction than when they are older to cut off their heads or hang them by the neck until they die. True justice destroys crime and preserves men, and not *vice versa*.

The Cardinal asks Hythloday why he thinks that theft ought not to be punished by death.

"It seems to me," answers Hythloday, "a very unjust thing to take away a man's life for a little money; for nothing in this world can be of equal value with a man's life. We ought not to approve of these terrible laws that make the smallest offences

[1] Cf. Stapleton, *Life of Sir Thomas More*, tr. Mgr. Hallett, pp. 101-104.

capital offences.... Even in the Mosaical law, though it was rough and severe... men were only fined and not put to death for theft. Are we to imagine that God in the new law of clemency and mercy, under which He ruleth us with fatherly tenderness, as His dear children, hath given us a greater scope and license to cruelty, than He did to the Jews? Upon these reasons it is that I think the putting thieves to death is not lawful."

And we may notice that while Hythloday thinks that no theft should be punished by death, yet death is the just punishment for murder. For he concludes, "It is plain and obvious that it is absurd and of ill consequence to the commonwealth, that a thief and a murderer should be equally punished."

We are here face to face with a problem that, even in our day, has not been thought out with sufficient care—what, for short perhaps, we may call the problem of the curb.

This problem is not an easy one whether we consider it in its individual or in its social aspect, and whether its solution be sought in the realm of faith, morals, politics or industry. Every sincere and modest-minded human being who honestly faces his own experience must be ready to admit that in

some sense that is undoubtedly true he is both a fallen creature and an undeveloped one, for he not only fails to achieve his end, but often falls away from those higher positions of virtue and intelligence that he has already achieved. And this is surely an admission, at least to himself, that he requires help from the outside of himself not only by way of encouragement, but often by way of restraint. He feels, as Mr. G. K. Chesterton has so well put it,[1] that he has reached the "breaking-point," and that he needs the compulsory application of the curb from without just at the very moment when he is least able to apply it to himself from within. And, indeed, as Mr. Chesterton again puts it, are not all the outward helps and controls and pressures that man has devised for himself, or which he believes that God has devised for him, a proof positive of this need which he so often feels for the curb in some form or other, and if not for himself at any rate for other people? What are, for instance, those great institutions of the State, of the Family and of the Church but outward provisions of help for man's inward helplessness in his most helpless moments and phases of life? And, once more, to enumerate more particular examples,

[1] *What's Wrong with the World?* p. 53.

what are "all human vows, laws, and contracts" but so many ways of surviving that "instant of potential surrender" to moral or doctrinal, or political, or industrial licence and disorder? Nor must it be forgotten that the curb is not less but even more necessary for those who occupy the places of worldly power. But suppose that a man or a woman, or even a society of men and women, refuses the curb? Suppose that the vow is broken or the just law disobeyed, or the fair contract disowned, or the doctrinal or moral or civil obligation is thrown over; and that he who does it then teaches others to do the same? Then, in so far as he does wrongly, the curb must be applied. And if it is resisted, it must be applied more sternly; and if still resisted, then yet more sternly still, until in the last limit of resistance some sort of final sentence is reached, which in the case of the State would be capital punishment and in that of the Church exclusion from its communion.

And so it is that to each and all, high and low, civil rulers and spiritual ones, the curb is a necessary thing, necessary to restrain the individual when least he is able to restrain himself, and necessary also for social restraint; for when in such cases it is wisely used it may serve to check at their very onset

those forces of rapid disintegration which, left uncurbed, bring whole nations and civilisations into collapse and almost irretrievable ruin.

There is, of course, a more excellent way (a way often advocated by those who use it with least discretion) but a way which the very best men are often unable to persuade the very worst men to go—against the determined purpose of their own free and uncurbed wills—this sort being of those who, in the end, compel even God Himself to say unto them, " Depart, ye cursed. . . . I know you not."

CHAPTER THREE

THE argument for a discreet use of the curb is More's own, and is one to be more frequently found in his other writings than it is in the *Utopia* itself. But he was none the less keen, on that account, to dispense with the use of the curb altogether, and where people would listen to reason to use reason rather than force, and to use it for all it was worth. And in this he and Hythloday were identically at one in their plea for Education as a substitute for lazy brutality. "If you suffer young people to be ill-educated, and their manners to be corrupted from infancy, and then punish them for those crimes to which their first education [or lack of it] disposed them, what else is to be concluded from this but that you first make thieves and then punish them?"[1]

Someone among Cardinal Morton's company presently remarks that since both thieves and vagabonds had now been provided for, there

[1] *U.* i. p. 38.

remained nothing more to be done but provide for the poor when old age or sickness made it impossible for them to work for their living; but as this promised an almost modern discussion upon old-age pensions, the Cardinal's fool, whose duty it was to chase away imminent boredom, chips in with some amusing banter at the expense not so much of the good and great as of the not very good whose professions were a trifle beyond their practice. As Englishmen we do not always make fun of a thing because we thoroughly despise it. On the contrary, it has more often been our way to smile or even laugh at the human imperfection of things that in themselves we hold in very high and intimate reverence; and, as everyone knows, no one was more English in this respect than More himself.

With regard, then, to the public provision for sickness and old age, "Leave that to me," says the fool, "and I will see to it."

For there is no sort of people whose sight I abhor more, having been so often vexed with them and with their sad complaints; but no matter how dolefully they have told their tale to me, they could never manage to squeeze a penny out of me: for either I had no mind to give it to them, or, if I had the mind, I had no penny in my pocket to give.... But I would have a law made for sending all these beggars to monasteries—the men to

the Benedictines to be lay-brothers, and the women to be nuns.

The Cardinal smiled, and approved of this jest; but the rest liked it in earnest.

There was a Franciscan present who, though he was a grave, morose man, yet he was so pleased with the reflection that was made on the clergy and on the monks, that he began to play with the fool, and said to him:

This will not deliver you from all beggars, except you take care of us friars.

That is done already (answered the fool), for the Cardinal has provided for you, by what he proposed [just now] for the restraining of vagabonds; for I know no vagabonds like you.

This well entertained the whole company, who, looking at the Cardinal, perceived that he was not ill-pleased with it; only the Friar himself was bit so severely that he lost his temper and began railing at the fool... and cited some dreadful threatenings out of scripture against him....

The jester, now in his element, gave as good as he got.

Good Friar, said he, Be not angry! for it is written, "In patience possess your soul."

The Friar answered, I am not angry, you hangman! at least I do not sin in my anger; for the Psalmist says, "Be ye angry and sin not."

Upon this the Cardinal admonished the Franciscan gently, wishing him to keep his temper.

No, my lord, he replied, I speak not but from a good zeal, as it is said, "The zeal of my house hath eaten me up"; and we recite in our nocturn lessons that those who mocked Elisha as he went up to the house of God

felt the effects of his zeal; which that mocker, that rogue, that scoundrel will perhaps feel.

You do this, perhaps, with good intention, said the Cardinal, but in my opinion, it were wiser in you, not to say better for you, not to engage in so ridiculous a contest with a fool.

No, my lord, answered he, that were not wisely done; for Solomon, the wisest of men, said, "Answer a fool according to his folly"; which I do now, and show him the ditch into which he will fall, if he is not aware of it; for if the many mockers of Elisha, who was but one bald man, felt the effects of his zeal, what will become of one mocker of so many friars, among whom there are so many bald men?

When the Cardinal saw that there was no end of this matter, he made a sign to the fool to withdraw, and turned the discourse another way.[1]

More is very pleased with Hythloday's account of his intercourse with Cardinal Morton: "for," as he adds, "everything has been related by you, both wisely and pleasantly, so you have made me imagine that I was in my own country, and grown young again, by recalling that good Cardinal into my thoughts in whose family I was bred from my childhood: and, though you are upon other accounts dear to me, yet you are dearer because you honour his memory so much."

[1] *U.* i. pp. 49-52.

Hythloday then points out to More that he may have noticed that everyone present in the Cardinal's company despised what he (Hythloday) had to say until the Cardinal sided with them; and then they almost fell over each other in their anxiety to agree with him. "Hence," he says, "you see what little use I should be at Court, since no one would value my advice for its own sake. Suppose I were to propose to my princely patron the plan of the Achorians [1] who, when he had acquired a second kingdom by their help found it more bother to keep than it had been to gain, made an humble address to their king, desiring him to choose which of the two kingdoms he wished to keep, since he could not hold both . . . and since no one would willingly have a groom whom he had to share with somebody else. Pray how do you think would such a speech as this be heard?"

"I confess," replies More, "I think not very well."

Thereupon follows an account of princely behaviour quite true to the facts of the time, and such as Machiavelli himself might not have disdained to approve of. For this prince, in order to gain his own selfish ends, with the full connivance

[1] *Achorians:* the word means a people without a place of habitation.

of his courtiers does everything in his power to deceive and plunder his own people by all the devices known to the political craft and hypocrisy of his day. "They think," says Hythloday, "that the people should have neither riches nor liberty, since these things make them less easy and tame to a cruel and unjust government; whereas necessity and poverty blunts them, makes them patient, and bears them down, and breaks their height of spirit, that might otherwise dispose them to rebel."

"It is certain," he continues, "that they are much mistaken that think the poverty of a nation is a means of public safety. Who quarrel more than beggars do? Who does more earnestly long for a change than he that is uneasy in his present circumstances? And who run in to create confusions with so desperate a boldness, as those who, having nothing to lose, hope to gain by them?"

"He that can find no other way of correcting the errors of his people but by taking from them the conveniences of life, shows that he knows not what it is to govern a free nation."

Then comes the concluding touch of humour to emphasise by contrast what has just been said.

"I would add that the law among the Macarians [the happy people] by which their king is tied by

oath never to have at once above a thousand pounds of gold in his treasury or as much silver as would equal that amount." [1]

With all this injustice, then, what is to be done? Hythloday confesses that he cannot agree with More, for the course that More has recommended seems far too moderate for him, and would merely be an attempt to cure the madness of others by remaining as mad as they.

"If I am to speak the truth," says he, "I must speak out plainly.... Whether a philosopher ought to speak less than the truth, I cannot say; but of this I am sure, I cannot do it. The sort of thing I should feel bound to advocate, such, for instance, as Plato theorises about in his *Republic*, or as the Utopians put into practice in their commonwealth, would certainly seem out of place and find no sort of favour with the princes and politicians of our day, for all the States of Europe are founded upon *private property*." [2]

Here we touch the central point of the whole Utopian discussion; but we must be patient with Hythloday, for he has several other things to say before he makes the full confession of his own political faith.

[1] *U.* i. p. 64. [2] *U.* i. p. 67.

"I will agree," he proceeds, "that it would be of little use for me to propose such a revolutionary change as the abolition of private property. But other matters I could bring up and show from history how certain bad policies have always been followed by evil consequences to the State. Surely only those princes and politicians would object to these who were themselves quite resolved to run in an opposite direction. If it is right for us to be silent about every political and social wrong, we must surely be numbered among those cowardly Christians who dare not call attention to the plain teachings of Christ in spite of His command that we should do otherwise. Am I wrong in saying that the greater part of Christ's precepts are more unacceptable to the men of this age than anything that I have previously said on my own account? But the fact is that our present-day teachers seem to have made themselves perfect in that very craft which you [Master More] just now [1] recommended to me yourself: for they, observing that the world would not willingly suit their lives to the teaching of Christ, have altered His doctrine to suit the world." [2]

It may be noticed that here Raphael Hythloday

[1] See p. 41. [2] *U.* i. pp. 67, 68.

not only criticises politicians, princes and courtiers, but the clergy as well; and in this he is the forerunner of the Messenger who, thirteen years later, in the *Dialogue Concerning Tyndale*, is to put up such a strong Protestant criticism against the Catholic Church as a whole and, of course, against the clergy in particular. What More said to the Messenger in 1529 may not unfairly be presumed to be what he might have thought but did not say to Hythloday at this point of their interesting talk. But whether he then thought it or not, it will serve to qualify what Hythloday himself has to say on this rather controversial subject.

I wot well (writes More) that there be therein [among the clergy] many lewd and nought. And surely where there is a multitude it is not without miracle well possible to be otherwise. But now if the bishops once take unto the priesthood better laymen and fewer (for of us they be made) all the matter would be more than half amended.

Now where ye say that ye see more vice in them than in ourself, truth it is that everything in them is greater because they are more bounden to be better. But else, the things that they misdo be the selfsame that we sin in ourself—which vices that, as ye say, we see more in them than in ourself, the cause is, I suppose, that we look more upon theirs than on our own, and fare as Aesop saith in a fable, that every man carrieth a double wallet on his

shoulder; and into the one that hangeth at his breast he putteth other folk's faults and therein looketh often. . . . In the other, he layeth up all his own [faults] and swingeth it at his back, which [he] himself never listeth to look in; but other that come after him cast an eye into it among. *Would to God we were all of the mind that every man thought no man so bad as himself. For that were the way to mend both them and us.*[1]

More was himself a reformer but one who believed that true reform must begin with self-criticism at home. He considered that the reversal of these two wallets on a man's shoulder was an important and necessary spiritual experience, and one which had important and very beneficial social effects, "for that were the way to mend both them and us."

But at first sight, and in democratic days, this tendency which we all have to criticise those in authority, whether sacred or secular, with or without knowledge of the really relevant facts, may seem a very small peccadillo, nay not a peccadillo at all but an important, if sometimes a self-important, virtue.

Speaking on this point elsewhere, More notices how difficult it is for any one of us to follow Christ

[1] *Dialogue Concerning Tyndale*, iii. c. 11, p, 215; c. 13, p. 229.

at all perfectly. It is such a hard thing to do. "It is more hard," he says, "to forbear each angry word than not to kill." And again, "What an anxiety and solicitude is there in forbearing every idle word," often a trivial matter in the world's estimation, but not in the estimation of Him Who made the world. "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account of it in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified; and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." [1]

This indeed is a hard saying; and if we may say so reverently, it seems almost an exaggerated one. But it becomes less so when we remember that human confidence is the *natural* basis of all authority whatsoever; and that without human confidence no earthly authority can exist or be effectively exercised and maintained. Has any man or woman, then, the right to destroy human confidence in the powers that be by idle words—that is by loose, irresponsible, uninformed and inopportune criticism? Only the truth can destroy the untrue, and even then only effectively when spoken by the right person, at the right time, and in the right place. The true will, eventually, destroy the

[1] *Matt.* xii. 24.

untrue, and, if it is God's truth, it will destroy in the most merciful way possible.[1] But alas for the man, or woman, who by idle words takes up the evil weapon of falsehood. He will perish by it, and many more will perish with him. Think of all the idle words that went to the making of our English Reformation or of the French Revolution, or again, in our own time, of the Russian Revolution, with all their accompanying horrors. God judges the world by His truth ; and His truth is both merciful and just ; but we men and women by our idle words separate His mercy from His truth, flinging it back in His face, unfulfilled. What makes revolutions so terrible, and so ineffective, is not God's merciful truth, but men's unmerciful lies—their idle words.

But Raphael Hythloday could not understand More's point of view. " I do not comprehend," says he, " what you mean by casting about, or by bending and handling things so dexterously, that if they may not go well, they may go as little ill as may be."

" For in courts," he continues, " they will not bear with a man's holding his peace or conniving at them. A man must barefacedly approve the worst

[1] The most merciful way is sometimes most painful, in the moral as in the physical order, but it is never brutal.

councils, or consent to the blackest designs; so that one would pass for a spy, or possibly a traitor, that did but coldly approve of such wicked practices. And when a man is engaged in such a society, he will be so far from being able to mend matters by his casting about, as you call it, that he will find no occasions of doing any good; the ill company will soon corrupt him . . . and by mixing councils with them, he must bear his share of all the blame that belongs wholly to others. It was no ill simile by which Plato set forth the unreasonableness of a philosopher's meddling with government. 'If one,' says he, 'shall see a great company run out into the rain every day, and delight to be wet in it; and if he knows that it will be to no purpose for him to go and persuade them to come into their houses and avoid the rain; so that all that can be expected from his going to speak to them will be, that he shall be wet with them; when it is so, he does best to keep within doors, and preserve himself, since he cannot prevail enough to correct other people's folly.'" [1]

This Platonic simile must have impressed itself deeply upon More's mind; for elsewhere he tells us that he had often heard it on Wolsey's lips, and

[1] *U.* i. pp. 68, 69.

on two occasions, at least, it came to him in the form of a definite temptation to resist a definite call and take the easier way—now, while he was interrogating the possibilities of Court life, and, nineteen years later, when he finally made up his mind to stand alone among his friends in direct opposition to the king and pay the ultimate penalty for so doing.[1]

So Raphael Hythloday was right when he said to More that if a philosopher entered upon a Court career he might "pass for a spy or possibly a traitor." But this did not prevent More himself from going forward upon his appointed path. More was a much tempted man.

We now come to the central doctrine of the Hythlodean political philosophy. "To speak plainly what is in my heart," says Hythloday to More, "I must freely own to you, that *as long as there is any private property* and while money is the standard of all other things, I cannot think that a nation can be governed justly or happily. Not *justly*, because the best things will fall to the share of the worst men;

[1] See *The Last Letters of Sir Thomas More* (Manresa Press), and among them the choicest of all in which More tells us of this last temptation of his in his own words. "I doubt," wrote Father Bridgett, "whether in the Acts of the martyrs there is a nobler scene than this" (pp. 54-80).

nor *happily*, because all things will be divided among a few . . . the rest being left in misery." [1]

" Wherefore," he continues, " when I reflect on the wise and good constitutions of the Utopians, among whom all things are so well governed and with so few laws ; and among whom, as virtue has its due reward, there is yet such an equality in material goods that every man lives in plenty. . . . When, I say, I balance all these things in my thoughts, I grow more favourable to Plato, and do not wonder that he resolved not to make any laws for such as would not submit to having all things in common. For so wise a man as he could not but foresee that in matters of material welfare the setting of all upon a level was the only way to make a nation happy, which cannot be obtained as long as there is any private property."

" For when every man draws to himself all that he can compass . . . it must needs follow that however well-off a nation may be, yet a few dividing the wealth among themselves, the rest must fall into poverty. So that there will be two sorts of people among them that deserve that their fortunes should be interchanged : the one being useless, but wicked and ravenous ; and the other, who by their constant

[1] *U.* i. p. 69.

industry serve the public more than themselves, being sincere and modest men."

A paragraph from *The Times* of 11th December, 1919, may serve as a gloss upon the previous paragraph in so far as it illustrates very clearly the distinction between just and unlimited profit. Sir Henry Norman, a sturdy Coalition Liberal, but in this case a discontented one, had moved in the House of Commons an amendment against the Coalition, and for the reason that it had proposed to limit the profits of the coal-owners to 1s. 2d. per ton of coal. Mr. Bonar Law had previously assured an anxious deputation that this bill would not be regarded as a precedent for the limitation of profits in any other industry. But this assurance did not assure Sir Henry Norman, keen business man that he was. And so he moved an amendment against the bill, brought forward by his own party, which was as follows: "That this House, believing that *any* limitation of profits to a fixed percentage necessarily *removes the incentive to individual effort* . . . declines to proceed further with the bill." One wonders what the same member of Parliament would have thought of a bill to raise the wages of all industrial workers in the United Kingdom to the standard of a "living wage" because, to use his

own words, an "incentive to individual effort" would thereby be supplied? It is difficult to draw the exact line between just and unjust profit, and also between a "living wage" and a wage that is less than such. But, at any rate, the attempt to do either of these reasonable things should not be made illegal because they are difficult. It might be better to illegalise some of the unreasonable things that are so easy.

But we must go back from 1919 to 1515.

Raphael Hythloday contends that the institution of private property is the main and persistent cause of social distress, and that any remedy short of its abolition is but a tinkering with the mischief—so that "it will fall out, as in a complication of diseases, that by applying a remedy to one trouble you will provoke another; and that which removes one ill-symptom produces others, so that the strengthening of the one part of the body weakens the rest."[1] And then, having once again reasserted his principal contention "that until private property is taken away there can be no equitable or just distribution made of things . . . nor can the world be happily governed," he listens to what More has to say in reply.

[1] *U.* i. p. 72.

The reply is one of direct disagreement. "On the contrary," says More, "it seems to me that men *cannot* live conveniently where all things are held in common."

And he continues, "How can there be sufficiency of goods, or anything, where every man will withdraw his hand from labour?"

Or to put his words into more modern form: The *natural* man needs a *natural* incentive in order to make him work diligently and well. Where such incentive is lacking, a man will grow slack and indifferent in his work, so that it becomes poor in quality and small in quantity. And yet you, Raphael Hythloday, want to do away with the very incentive which alone will make the natural man adequately productive, namely, the hope of private gain. And you would do this very thing in order to realise your scheme of Utopian perfection. And then More concludes: "For as the hope of gain doth not excite a man, so the confidence he has in other men's industry may make him slothful." [1]

This, then, is More's first and principal objection to Hythloday's State Communism. And the gravamen of his objection is not so much against the taking away of a man's private property, though

[1] *U.* i. pp. 72, 73.

of course he would object to that in so far as it was done with injustice, but rather the taking away from a man of his *natural desire* to work hard and well for his own profit, since only the natural incentive of private gain can keep most men at an adequate pitch of productivity.[1]

But More has another objection to advance against Hythloday's State Communism. He argues that " if people come to be pinched with poverty, and yet cannot dispose of anything they have as their own [in order to alleviate their destitute condition], what can follow but perpetual sedition and bloodshed, especially when the *reverence and authority* due to magistrates falls to the ground? For I cannot imagine how that can be kept up among those that are in all [material] things equal to one another." [2]

Here More mentions what he considers to be the necessary, permanent and natural supports of all government whatsoever; and he is only repeating

[1] Cf. Dean Inge in *The Listener*, 16th October, 1929. " As for the idea of abolishing private gain, I will only make one obvious remark. If you destroy the chief motives which induce people to work hard, namely, the desire to improve their own position, and still more to give their children a good start in the world, a few people will work as they do now, the majority will work badly."

[2] *U.* i. p. 73.

what in 1515 was a political commonplace, although to many in our time it may seem less like a commonplace and more like a challenge to their customary ways of thought. "Always from a boy," writes Professor R. W. Chambers, "More feels himself to be under authority." [1]

And while this is true both of More himself and of the age in which he was schooled, it is fair to remember that for him and his contemporaries there were two powers to which reverence was due, the *natural* and the *supernatural*, the State and the Church. Both felt themselves to be under this double obligation of rendering, or trying to render, to Caesar the things that were Caesar's, and to God the things that were God's. It is true, of course, that we still speak of Church and State, but not in the sense that More spoke of them; for then their relations to each other were very different from what, in the England of to-day, they so evidently are. This point needs to be somewhat emphasised; for then, as Lord Acton has pointed out, Church and State though separate were bound together for the common good; just as by a not unfair analogy we may say that in a well-ordered family, mother

[1] *The Fame of Blessed Thomas More* (Sheed & Ward, 1929), p. 15.

and father, though separate in fact and function, are bound together for the good of their children. And in each case the bond is perpetual and a divinely constituted one. But since what God had bound together was at the Reformation torn asunder, the relationship between Church and State in our own country has ceased to be rightly ordered, and so has ceased to be productive of its highest measure and quality of spiritual and social good. And, in consequence, what has happened to the relations of Church and State, is now happening to those of family life.

More held that in the well-ordered life of every Christian nation there were two authorities each worthy of reverence; and that of these the supernatural authority came first because it was both spiritual and universal, while the natural authority came after, since it was national and secular. And, in his later life, as we all know, he contended to the death against what he considered an undue and exaggerated demand for reverence and authority on the part of the State, opposing Tyndale who fathered the doctrines of State Supremacy, and Henry VIII who fostered what Tyndale had fathered.[1]

[1] Notwithstanding Mr. A. F. Pollard's recent book on *Wolsey*, which has added so much to our knowledge of this period, it is still difficult discretely to enumerate the masters and mistresses

More stood for the balance in this matter, as in others, because he realised that the Secular Power is unable to stand alone, but needs as its partner a Spiritual Power to stand, prayerful and confident of right, above the battle of conflicting because excessive human desires which is ever being waged below; and needs it also to remind and continually to re-inspire the national conscience to undertake those hard and complicated duties of human justice which naturally it is tempted to forget and sometimes even to repudiate.

A reference to what More himself wrote in 1529, when the Spiritual Power was about to be repudiated, will best inform us how accurate an estimate he then made of the social consequences of the Reformation teachings. Speaking of the Lutheran reformers, he writes:

What they call the liberty of the gospel is to be discharged of all order and of all laws, and do what they

of Henry VIII in the disastrous business of the Reformation. And if Wolsey *is* responsible, ought he not to share its earlier responsibilities with Tyndale, with Anne Boleyn, and with others? Julius II might be added to the list; for in the give-and-take between the Spiritual and Secular Powers of Christendom, the human parts of both Church and State being pretty constantly imperfect, one power seldom got an inch from the other without trying to take an ell. And the same thing still happens occasionally in family life. But surely that is no sufficient reason for the State abolition of the Sacrament of Matrimony and all its difficult and unsentimental duties.

please, which be it good or bad, be as they say, nothing but the works of God wrought in them. But they hope by this means God shall for the while work in them many merry pastimes. Wherein if their heresy were once received, and the world changed thereby, they should find themselves sore deceived. For the laws and order among men, the fear of [spiritual] punishment once taken away, there is no man so strong that he could keep his pleasure long but that he should find a stronger take it from him. But after it were once come to that point, and the world once ruffled and fallen into wildness, what heaps of heavy mischiefs would there fall, and how long would it be ere the way were found to set the world in order and peace again.[1]

[1] *Dialogue Concerning Tyndale*, iv. c. 12, p. 301.

CHAPTER FOUR

It has often been noticed that every age as it passes has its own currency of ideas and of terms which are used to express them. When the *Utopia* was written in the period that succeeded the anarchy of the Wars of the Roses there was a great need for "authority" and for the "loyalty" and "reverence due to magistrates" of which virtues More was so conspicuous an example. In later ages other ideas and terms have expressed the national urgency of the moment, as, for instance, "liberty, fraternity and equality" at the time of the French Revolution, or again, "Home Rule" within our own memory. And it is very natural that each age should coin its own watchwords, since each age is under an urgent compulsion to correct the excesses and defects of the age which has immediately preceded it. But another thing invariably happens to each succeeding age as it comes into power which also is natural, nature sometimes being weak rather than reasonable; and that is that it goes to excessive lengths

not only in neglecting the ideas of the age preceding it, but also in deriding them or even in discarding them altogether. And when this last step is taken a revolution is nigh, even at the doors. And so it is that as age succeeds to age an excessive liking for new ideas and an excessive dislike for old ones keeps the world in a continual state of unbalanced change. Only "the One remains; the many change and pass." So wrote the poet Shelley. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away." So read the last words of the last Gospel of the Christian year.

And there is one thing more that has happened again and again throughout the Christian centuries as they have succeeded each other. When the hot fit of enthusiasm has come to each new age in the flush of its youthful power, the Catholic Church has intervened in its quiet way, bidding it beware of being too much on with the new ideas and too much off with the old. And often, as may have been expected, the new age hasn't heeded the warning; sometimes, indeed, it has gone so far as to resent it and call the Church reactionary. "Why do you come in," it has been tempted to say, "and spoil our fun, just when we're in for no end of a good time on earth?"

And the Church has answered with what to some has been a still more provoking quietude, " In order that you may have a *better* time ! "

Thus the Church exists, and has always claimed to exist, in order to call in what is good in the old and balance it with what is good in the new. And any age which has been wise enough to listen to the Church has saved itself no end of trouble ; but if not, it has had to learn in the end, what at the first it refused to listen to, by passing through the fire of a very bitter experience. For the Church is not reactionary. It speaks the truth ; and that truth that because it is eternally true is never old, but always the same.

More reverenced the goodness of authority ; but, even more, he reverenced the authority of goodness. In this respect an interesting comparison may be made between himself and Wolsey. Neither of them were men unduly subservient by nature ; and yet the terms in which each of them expresses his dutiful obedience to the King must seem almost unreal to many people in our day ; but nevertheless they were wholly sincere as uttered by those high-placed and distinguished men. And yet at the last each of them had a confession to make which tells how well they agreed with each other in belief, and

yet how much they differed through life in practising that belief. Wolsey confessed that he had served his King too well; but More's confession tells us that well as he had served his King, there was another service to which he had always given the higher place. Roper reports of it as spoken on the scaffold within the Tower on the morning of his martyrdom:

> I have always been bounden (he said) to the King's highness for the benefits and honours which he hath ... from time to time heaped upon me, and yet more bounded I am to his Grace for putting me into this place, where I have had convenient time and space to have remembrance of my end, and so help me God, most of all ... am I bound to his Highness, that it pleased him so shortly to rid me of the miseries of this wretched world. And therefore will I not fail most earnestly to pray for his Grace both here, and also in another world.[1]

Here was "reverence for authority" indeed; but in More's case, as in Wolsey's, two reverences rather than one, and, in More's case but not in Wolsey's, both in order and neither in conflict—first for the Spiritual Power, and, after that, for the Secular, each of them visibly embodied, the one in the Universal Church and the other in the Particular State.

[1] Roper, *Life* (Walter Scott), p. 59.

And, finally, in connection with his objections to Hythloday's State Communism, it may be worth while to compare More's *ipsissima verba* with those of Pope Leo XIII written in 1878.

More writes :

It seems to me that men cannot live conveniently where all things are common. . . .

I cannot imagine how that reverence and authority can be kept up among those that are in all things equal to one another.[1]

Leo XIII writes :

The Church recognises the existence of inequality amongst men who are by nature unlike in mental endowment and strength of body, and even in amount of fortune, *and she enjoins that the right of property* and of its disposal, derived from nature, should in the case of every individual remain intact and inviolate. . . .

Moreover she lays the rich under strict command to give of their superfluity to the poor, impressing them with the fear of the divine judgment, which will exact the penalty of eternal punishment unless they succour the wants of the needy. . . .

If such conclusions be disallowed . . . human society will be agitated by constant outbreaks and ravaged by plunder and rapine such as even of late years we have had occasion to deplore.[2]

[1] *U.* i. pp. 72, 73.

[2] The Bull *Quod Apostolici Muneris*, quoted from *The Pope and the People* (Catholic Truth Society, 1929, price 2s.), pp. 19, 20.

In another passage Leo XIII points out that the equality of men lies in their nature and spiritual destiny, and in the rights and duties pertaining to every human being on that account, but not in strength of body and mind nor in character, will and moral disposition. And just as the body, in its perfection, is composed of different materials and members, unlike in form and purpose, so combined as to constitute a whole both beautiful and strong, so the commonwealth is composed of men who are unlike one another, but whose very unlikeness, if adapted to different degrees of honour, or culture, or capacity, aptly combine for the common good in a well-ordered State. *The true Christian equality resting on justice and charity*, by no means removes the differences of one man from another, but out of the variety of capacity, position, function, duty, pursuit and aim will draw a marvellous agreement and harmony for the general welfare of society.[1]

The basis of Christian equality is spiritual rather than material, eternal rather than temporal. If this life were all, the human struggle for the best that it could give would be inevitable ; but to the Christian, who is really such in fact and spirit and habit, it is at once and, for the time, the most important but

[1] *Op. cit.*, *Humanum Genus*, p. 73.

least abiding part of his destiny. The world is for his use, but not for his final satisfaction; and its very inequalities, roughnesses, disadvantages and even sicknesses are to him, if rightly understood, the very instruments of the perfection which he is here to strive for and finally to achieve in another life. Robert Browning puts the idea tersely:

> Then welcome each rebuff
> That turns earth's smoothness rough,
> Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
> Be our joys three-parts pain!
> *Strive*, and hold cheap the strain;
> *Learn*, nor account the pang; *dare*, never grudge the throe!
> For thence . . .
> Shall life succeed in that it seem to fail:
> What is he but brute
> Whose flesh has soul to suit?
> . . . . . .
> To man propose the test—
> The body at its best,
> How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?[1]

There is nothing borne home with more certainty to the pilgrim spirit well upon its way than that "all things," the seeming worst often better than the seeming best, "work together" for them that live in justice upon the charity of God.

[1] *Works*, vol. vii. p. 111.

This may seem stark doctrine, especially as More himself puts it. But it may be worth thinking out.

" Long for first and chiefly the kingdom of God, and all these earthly things God shall cast unto thee beside ! " Christ shewing thereby that by the hearty longing for heaven we shall have both twain.

And surely the things coming of the earth for the necessary sustenance of man requireth rather the labour of the body than the care of the mind. But the getting of heaven requireth care, cure, and *ardent desire of mind*, much more than the labour of the body, saving that *the busy desire of the mind* can never suffer the body to be idle.

Thou wilt haply say, " What if I cannot labour, or have more small children to find than my labour of three days will suffice to feed for one day ? Shall I not then care and take thought how they shall live to-morrow ? Or tell what other shift I shall find ? "

First, I tell thee what shift thou shalt make in such case : and after that I shall shew thee that, if all shift fail thee, yet if thou be a faithful man thou shalt take no thought. I say, if thou lack, thou shalt labour to thy power by just and true business to get that thee and thine lacketh. *If thy labour suffice not, thou shalt shew thy state, that thou hast little money and much charge to some such men as have much money and little charge ; and they be then bounden of duty to supply of theirs that thee lacketh of thine.*[1]

[1] This, of course, is pre-Reformation social doctrine, which now, in England, not even the law alloweth. But it is still the doctrine of the Universal Church as, indeed, expressly stated above (p. 107) by Leo XIII.

What if they will not? Then, I say, that yet oughtest thou not to take thought and care in heart or despair of God's promise for thy living, but to make thyself very sure that either God will provide thee and thine meat to relieve thee, or send thee meat by miracle (as He in desert wilderness sent some men their meat by crow), or else His pleasure is that thou, and thine, shall live no longer, but die and depart by famine, as He will that some other die by sickness.... For though He hath promised to provide us meat, yet hath He not promised it for longer time than Him liketh to let us live, to whom we be all debtors of death. And therefore though he sent Daniel meat enough by Abacuc, the prophet, into the den among the lions, yet sent He none at all to Lazarus, but let him die for famine at the rich glutton's gate. There died he without grudge, without anxiety, with good will and glad hope, whereby he went into Abraham's bosom. Now if thou do the like, thou shalt go into a better bosom, into heaven, into the bosom of our Saviour Christ.[1]

The idea that every human being in necessity has the moral right to ask help in his hour of dire need from any other human being, who is in possession of more than the necessary means of livelihood, has only to be stated in order to be accepted as reasonable. But the point is often missed that if people would do *voluntarily*, out of their own free Christian good will, what is morally right, in that particular

[1] More, *The Four Last Things*, pp. 76-78.

matter the need for State compulsion would never come in. For them, in the right sense of the word, the law would become of none effect. In a non-Christian State where voluntary Christian good will is thought to be chimerical, compulsion, of course, is the only social weapon left. But, in the name of common sense, it would be better for every State to encourage voluntary good will and whatever produces it (even it were the Christian religion) as much as possible; and only to use State compulsion in so far as that is lacking. State compulsion is so unreasonable a thing to apply to a reasonable soul (so long as there is a spark of reason left in it) that it should be the last and the least rather than the first and the most frequent of the weapons of social betterment. But in our country, although we often say with our lips that it is better to give than to receive, charity is discouraged by the rich and loathed by the poor. Is this the result of too much or of too little real Christianity?

But let us remember that charity is only right if the possession of private property is right. The two stand or fall together.

We see, then, the consistency of the Catholic social doctrine, and in this connection one may remember the saying about "No dogmas, no

Deans," and say, too, in a somewhat similar sense, "No charity, no private property"—for the man who hardens his heart in this particular way, and does it deliberately and habitually, does lose his most valuable private possession, namely, his own soul. It is to such that God says, "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee." [1]

And if revolutions are due, in the first place, rather to those with hard hearts than to those with soft heads, the severe judgment of God just quoted has a pertinent and general application to nations of men as well as to certain particular individuals included therein.

If, then, the *right* to possess private property is closely linked to the *duty* of private charity, or rather to that part of it which we designate as "corporal acts of mercy," we are not surprised to find that More lays such stress upon it as he does in the *Utopia* and elsewhere as we have already shown. One further quotation may be added in confirmation.

Writing in his *Apology* (1532) against Christopher St. German, whom he calls the Pacifier, he says :

> By what right men may take away from any man, spiritual or temporal, against his will, the land that is lawfully his own, that thing the pacifier telleth us not

[1] *Luke*, xii. 20.

yet.... But I have heard some good and wise and well-learned men say that all the world can never bring the reason that can prove it right. And, as for mine own part, like as I have somewhat largely said in my book of the *Supplication of Souls* (1529), if any man would give the counsel to take any man's land or goods from him, pretending that he hath too much, or that he useth it not well, or that it might better be used if some other had it, he giveth such counsel as he may when he list, and will peradventure after stretch a great deal farther then the goods and possessions of only spiritual men.[1]

This short chapter is rather heavily documented, since in it one has tried to make unmistakably clear More's own Catholic social philosophy which is unmistakably present in the *Utopia*. Nor is apology needed for calling attention to the fact that Catholic social philosophy as More understood it in no way differs from Catholic social philosophy as we understand it to-day.

[1] *English Works* (1557), p. 881 H.

CHAPTER FIVE

We now come to the second book of the *Utopia*, which was written while More was taking some enforced leisure at Antwerp between the beginning and end of his business embassy at Bruges. It was written, too, before the first book and in a markedly different key; for while in that we are faced with the realities of political failure and the social misery that necessarily follows it, in this we are bidden to contemplate a different state of political and social affairs, where all things go easily and well, and where the conditions of life appear of so perfect a kind that their counterpart, as the very name *Utopia* signifies, is nowhere to be found on earth; and one of which More said, "I rather wish than hope to see followed in our governments." [1]

That More wished his readers to infer the nonentity of *Utopia*, we gather still further from the names he has given to the Utopian places and personalities. Its hero and discoverer is Raphael

[1] *U.* ii. p. 197.

Hythloday, Hythloday meaning "an expert in nonsense." Its capital is Amaurote, "a spectral city" situated on the river Anyder, "a waterless river," and its neighbours, on the one side, are the Alaopolites, "townsmen without a town," and, on the other, the Achorians, "a people without a country."

But in spite of all this slightly concealed fun, the *Utopia* has been taken by the unco' serious far more seriously than its author meant. But they have some excuse, since More's own intimate friends found it difficult, when he was speaking, to tell either from his words or from his countenance whether his serious sayings were jokes or whether his jokes were serious sayings. And such is the convincing sense of reality given by his playful genius to this "merry tale" that there were people of practical temperament who, after they had read it, seriously proposed to fit out a seafaring expedition to its happy shores. Are we wrong, then, in supposing that there are many like them even in these latter days? One remembers *Punch's* story of the bookseller who, when written to not long ago for a cheap edition of the *Utopia*, replied that cheap editions of it had often been talked about, but none as yet had been produced.

We know, by now, perhaps almost too well, the crescent-shaped island of Utopia, with its sea coming in eleven miles between the horns of the crescent, surrounded by land to the compass of about five hundred miles, and well secured from unfriendly winds, unapproachable from the sea by strangers on account of hidden rocks, and so well fortified both by nature and by art that a small force could easily hold out against a much larger invading army. Its original conqueror was Utopus, who gave to the island his name; its capital was Amaurote, and there were fifty-three other cities upon the island, each within a day's journey of the one next to it.

The first general impression that comes to us of the Utopian life is that it was one of very severe discipline. Everything is made subservient to the general good, and few of the inhabitants of Utopia rejoice even in a small measure of personal independence. Yet their manner of living must have had its attractions, since we are told that those who came from abroad gladly embraced even slavery in Utopia rather than return to their own native countries.

Again, there were many features of Utopian existence that, in spite of its rigid and all-compelling State Communism, seem hardly consonant with

modern communistic ideas. It was a monarchy, though elective; the family was its most cherished and important social unit; slavery was an accepted institution, and a *natural* religion of a most ceremonial kind was permanently established, held in great reverence and faithfully practised by every member of the Utopian community. Finally, there was little free thought, very little free speech, and no free love.[1]

Each individual Utopian was but a pawn in the hand of the governing powers. A twentieth-century individual prides himself upon his freedom to go wherever he pleases and whenever it pleases him. But in Utopia a man could hardly move more than a few hundred yards without an official leave to do so. Nor, again, could he stay where he was for very long without special permission. The town dwellers were sent by turns to live and work in the country and, similarly, the countryfolk to live and labour in the towns, in order that a balance between physical and mental fitness might always be kept up. Week-ends away from home were forbidden without official consent; and if anyone took French leave, for the first offence he was "roughly handled," and for the second condemned to slavery. People were also forbidden "to get into corners together" for

[1] *U.* ii. c. 7, p. 143.

fear they might talk politics or even go so far as to hatch sedition. The games indulged might have satisfied the grim souls of John Knox and Oliver Cromwell; but we should have thought them dull, since the most riotous of them consisted in a mock battle between the vices and the virtues, in which virtue was always handicapped by having to fight in the open, while the vices could be as underhanded as they pleased. There were no inns, taverns, or brothels.

Nor was there much freedom in the matter of clothes, which were sober in colour, each dress for a lady, or suit for a gentleman, being made to wear for seven years.

There were public lectures of the W.E.A. type, to which none were obliged to go except those marked out for literary careers; and as they were delivered before daybreak, none but the brave deserved that kind of fare.

Not long ago, when talking to a flourishing branch of the Workers' Educational Association upon these same Utopian customs, there was a good deal of sharp criticism at the end, particularly of those Utopian regulations which forbade political discussion outside the council houses of the nation. Such undemocratic repression was a thing of the

past, and would never again be tolerated by such lovers of political freedom as we were.

And yet only the day before these lines were written, General Smuts, speaking at Cambridge on "Democracy," deplored the dangers to reasonable government now crowding upon us because of the unbridled licence of political discussion allowed in these our democratic times. I presume to quote from the verbatim report of his very courageous speech given in the *Manchester Guardian*.[1]

"Owing (he said) to the spread of education and the reading habit, *the pervasive influence of the Press* [and may we add, in particular, the most powerful Mammon-ridden section of it] and the cinema, and numerous other forms of public and private propaganda, the massed force of public opinion is every day becoming greater and more incalculable, and to politicians more terrifying.[2] It is no longer the elected representatives of the people who mainly guide the popular mind in matters political. The politician of to-day often plays quite a minor *rôle* in the formation and guidance of public opinion. He is often more a puppet than a guide in public

[1] December 3, 1929.

[2] Cf. Leo XIII on the liberty of the Press. *The Pope and the People* (1929), Encyclical on *Human Liberty*, p. 84 *sq.*

affairs. . . . The position therefore often arises that in the very difficult situations *the politicians* as the representatives of public opinion *have to be cut out*, and *the handling of the problems entrusted to impartial experts who are not dependent on public opinion.*"

The italics are not in the original report. General Smuts hopes that the limitations of Universal Suffrage may be overcome by the skilled and disinterested help of Universal Science, but the limitations of unassisted human nature are the same under whatsoever conditions or names they make themselves apparent. That should not make us pessimists, but it should make us realists. "Democracy is not enough," he concludes. "The fierce and implacable spirit of nationalism . . . is not enough. . . . We want to-day the scientific spirit in human affairs. It is this spirit which above all is to-day called for in the administration of human affairs. As justice is said to be blind, so science is deaf and blind to illusion and passion; it deals with facts on their merits. And as applied to human affairs it means the sober pursuit of the truth, the single desire to know things as they are, and to assign values according to facts; to find solutions which will be in accord with nature's laws, and not the dictates of human self-interests."

But is not human self-interest itself a part of nature's law, and incidentally the mainspring of adequate material production? It too should have a place in the "solutions" that the scientific spirit can certainly find for us.

Science in order to be itself needs something more than itself. It has been said that in England humanism was never pagan; is it necessary for science to be so? Aquinas, in his day, was as truly a man of scientific spirit as General Smuts, and as zealous as he to use all available knowledge for the good of his fellow-men. But the education he desired for them was not arrested at the point where the phenomenal gives place to the reality behind phenomena, and upon which it depends for its intellectual light as inevitably as does the moon upon the sun. "Universal Suffrage," says General Smuts, "is not enough. . . . Democracy is not enough." But is Universal Science, alone and by itself, enough to provide for human needs? There is something more, something more universal, something more intimately related both to the depths and to the heights of our creaturely being. And while both More and Aquinas were at one with General Smuts in his passionate desire for scientific justice between man and man and between

nation and nation, as those who care to read their writings can see for themselves, yet the two former had, in addition to this, a desire at once more passionate and yet more reasonable still. And of this More himself will tell us in a subsequent chapter.

In its form the Utopian State was an elective monarchy. The King was elected by a small official college, themselves elected by a larger conciliar body, each of these again being chosen yearly by a group of thirty families. And thus it was that the Utopian State rested upon the determining foundation of family life in the following order :

The King,
20 Tranibores,
200 Syphogrants,
Each Syphogrant chosen yearly by 30 families.

The Tranibores met every third day, and oftener if needed, two Syphogrants being called to each meeting, and these were changed daily. It was a fundamental rule that no conclusion could be arrived at in anything that related to the public good until it had first been debated for three several days in the Council. It was death for any to meet and consult concerning the State unless either in

the Council or in the assembly of the whole people. When anything of importance was afoot it was sent to the Syphogrants, who after having communicated it to the families which each of them represented, then considered it themselves, and after that referred it to the assembly of the whole island. It was a rule also never to debate any matter on the same day as it was proposed. In this way it was thought that a check was placed upon any conspiracy between the prince and the Tranibores; and the prince himself was removable upon suspicion of any design to enslave the people.

The whole method of government seemed to be devised as a check against the dangers of political individualism. The family was *the* social unit; and these families united together, men and women, old and young, by a common bond of social discipline, were, in the last resort, the determining units of Utopian political life. This point is of interest even to-day when the respective rights of the parent and the State are being so much discussed in regard to Education, not only in our own country but in others, as for instance in Italy between Mussolini and the present Pope.[1]

[1] Cf. also Cardinal Bourne's advocacy of the right of parents to choose the school of that religious type which they wish their children to attend.

The basic occupation of the Utopians was agricultural, "and it was so universally understood among them all, that no person, either man or woman, was ignorant of it. From their childhood they were instructed in it, partly at school and partly by practice, they being often led out into the fields about the town, where they not only saw others at work, but were likewise exercised themselves."

"Besides agriculture, which was common to them all, every man had the practical knowledge of some trade to which he could apply himself, such as the manufacture of wool or flax, masonry, smith's work, or carpentry."

"Yet they did not wear themselves out with perpetual toil from morning to night, as if they were beasts of burden . . . but they appointed *six hours for work* (per day), three before dinner, after which they rested for two hours, and then worked three more. After that they had supper, and going to bed at eight, slept for eight hours."

In spite of the short hours of work there was no scarcity in Utopia; for, as Hythloday points out, in disagreement with More,[1] in Utopia everyone works hard while he or she is at work, which is not

[1] *U.* i. p. 73.

the case in other nations, where a great part of the people are idle, or work to little purpose. "For consider," says he, "that women generally do little, who are half mankind; and if some few of them do work, well then their husbands are idle. Next, think of the number of priests who are idle, and also of those who call themselves 'religious.' Add to these all the rich men, together with all the strong and lusty beggars; and last of all consider how few of those that do work are employed in labour that is really necessary to mankind."

The Utopians, unlike all other human creatures we have record of, seem to have had very few superfluous desires, or those that they had were very easily inhibited; consequently they could produce all that was really necessary, and yet had plenty of time to devote to "the improvement of their minds; for in this they thought the happiness of life to consist." [1]

As before mentioned, the Utopians set great store by family life. "Their women, when grown up, were married out; but all the males, both children and grandchildren, live still in the same house in great obedience to their common parent, unless age has weakened his understanding; and in that case

[1] *U.* ii. pp. 92-96.

he that is next to him in age comes in his room." None of their cities had more than six thousand families, and no family could have less than ten and more than sixteen persons, the natural differences in family being put right by removing some of the children of the more prolific to those who had few children or none. Obedience was the necessary bond of family peace. "Wives serve their husbands, children their parents, and always the younger serve the elder."

It is interesting to notice the similarity between Hythloday's Utopian family and More's own as described in a very well-known letter of Erasmus's :

More has built near London upon the Thames, a modest yet commodious mansion. There he lives, surrounded by his numerous family, including his wife, his son, and his son's wife, his three daughters and their husbands, with eleven grandchildren. There is not any man living so affectionate to his children as he, and he loveth his old wife as if she were a girl of fifteen. Such is the excellence of his disposition that, whatever happeneth that could not be helped, he is as cheerful and well-pleased as though the best thing possible had been done. In More's house you would say that Plato's academy was revived again, only, whereas in the academy the discussion turned upon geometry and the power of numbers, the home at Chelsea is a veritable school of Christian religion. In it none, man or woman,

but readeth or studieth the liberal arts, yet is their chief care piety. There is never seen any idle; the head of the house governs it, not by lofty carriage and oft rebukes, but by gentleness and lovable manners . . . nor is mirth wanting as a savour therewithal.

A less well-known letter from Erasmus to Budaeus, after giving the details of More's family life, tells us that More's health, unlike that of Budaeus, is all the better for study, and that in consequence he has more influence with the King, is more popular at home and abroad, more pleasant and useful to his friends and relatives, is abler for business and political life and more thankful to heaven. Some say that learning and common sense seldom go together, but this is not the case with More; and " his influence at Court has been such that there is scarcely a nobleman in the land who considers his children fit for their rank except they have been well-educated, and learning has become fashionable even at Court itself."

Erasmus also confesses that at one time he thought learning useless to women, but More changed his opinion; and once when he suggested to him that he would grieve the more if his daughters had died young after having such pains expended upon their education, More answered that

he would rather they died learned than unlearned, and by such an answer reminded Erasmus of Phocion's answer to his wife, when she lamented that he was to suffer death innocently, " Wife," said he, " would it be better that I should die guilty ? "

Two further quotations from More's letters tell us something of the intellectual and spiritual possibilities of well-ordered life as realised within his own family circle. The first is to William Gunnell, his children's tutor.

I was particularly pleased (he writes) because I notice that Elizabeth shows a gentleness and self-command in the absence of her mother which some children would not show in her presence. Let her understand that such behaviour delights me more than all possible letters [showing how well she was getting on with her studies]. Though I prefer learning joined with virtue to all treasures of kings, yet renown for learning, when it is not joined with good life, is nothing less than splendid and notorious infamy. . . . I have dwelt on this matter, my dear Gunnell, because of what you say in your letter, that Margaret's lofty character should not be abased. In this judgment I quite agree with you. But to me, and no doubt to you also, that man would seem to abase a generous character who should accustom it to admire what is vain and low. He, on the contrary, raises the character who . . . teaches it to look upon those shadows of good things which almost all mortals,

through ignorance of truth, greedily snatch as if they were true goods. . . . Therefore, my dear Gunnell, I have often begged not only of you, who would do it out of affection for my children, of your own accord, nor my wife, who is sufficiently urged thereto by her maternal love . . . but all my friends, that they will warn my children to avoid the precipices of pride . . . and walk in the pleasant levels of modesty. . . .

I fancy that I hear you object that these precepts, though true, are beyond the capacity of my young children, since you will scarcely find a man, however old and advanced in virtue, whose mind is so firmly set as not to be tickled sometimes with the desire of glory.

But, dear Gunnell, the more I see the difficulty of getting rid of this pest of pride, the more do I see the necessity of getting to work at it from childhood. For I find no other reason why this evil clings so to our hearts, than because, almost as we are born, it is sown in the tender minds of children by their nurses, cultivated by their teachers, and brought to its full growth by their parents ; no one teaching them even what is good without, at the same time, awakening the expectation of praise, so that while we study how to please the greater number we grow ashamed of being good with those who will always be few.

That this plague of vain glory may be banished far from my children, I do desire that you, my dear Gunnell, and their mother and all their friends, would chant to them, and repeat it to them and beat it into their heads, that vain glory is a despicable thing and a thing to be spat upon ; and that there is nothing more sublime than

that humble modesty so often praised by Christ. And this your prudent character will so enforce so as to teach virtue rather than reprove vice and make them love good advice instead of hating it. . . .

And thus you will bring about that my children, who are dear to me by nature, and still more dear to me by learning and virtue, will become most dear to me by their advance in knowledge and conduct. Adieu.

From the Court on the Vigil of Pentecost.

And again, writing to his favourite daughter Margaret, he shows the value he sets upon the education of his children :

I beg you, Margaret, tell me about your progress you are making with your studies. For I assure you that, rather than allow my children to be idle and slothful, I would make a sacrifice of wealth, and bid adieu to other cares and business, to attend to my children and my family, among whom none is more dear to me than yourself, my beloved daughter.[1]

More's keenness on the education of women and its influence on the life of his own day may be contrasted with that of another great lawyer, Sir John Fortescue, who died when More was quite young : " Nature," he writes, " disposes greyhounds for the fields and the pursuit of hares ; but cats for staying at home to catch mice."

[1] Stapleton, *Life of More*, tr. Mgr. Hallett, chap. x. pp. 98-111 *passim*, but read the whole most interesting chapter.

More's sense of parental responsibility for the right education of his own children cannot but recall to one's mind the words of Pius XI on the same matter addressed to Mussolini not many months ago, and particularly since in our own country also it is becoming an important political issue. " The State," writes Pius XI, " cannot and should not disinterest itself in the education of its citizens, but merely for the purpose of aiding in everything that the individual and the family cannot themselves furnish. The State is not created to absorb, to swallow, to annihilate the family. That would be an absurdity contrary to nature, as the Family precedes Society and the State.... The State should contribute and procure what is necessary to help ... and perfect the action of the Family in order to fulfil the desires of the father and the mother, above all in order to respect the divine rights of the Church.... But we shall never be in accord [with Signor Mussolini] in anything that seeks to impede, diminish or deny the right which nature and God have given to the Family and to the Church in the field of education. On this point we do not say we are intractable, because intractability is not a virtue, but we do say we are intransigent, just as we could not fail to be

intransigent if anyone asked us how much two and two made. The answer is four ; and it is not our fault that it is not five or six or fifty." [1]

It is true, of course, and it has often been pointed out, that the *Utopia* bears an obviously Platonic impress. But in one respect it greatly differs from Plato, and that is in the honourable position of civic and national responsibility therein given to the institution of the Family.[2]

[1] *The Times*, May 16, 1929.

[2] Cf. G. Dudok, *Sir Thomas More and his Utopia* : " Whereas Plato with his stringent measures sacrifices family life to [what he believes to be] the welfare of the State ; it is More who, with the same end in view, fosters an intimate family life for the benefit of the commonwealth." The same writer also points out that " in the Utopian arrangements for marriage, there is no interference with nature." The Utopian remedy for surplus population was what some now call colonisation and others imperialism. Hythloday says that any man who finds it difficult to live in Utopia " has by the law of nature a right to such waste portion of the earth as is necessary to his subsistence " (*U.* ii. c. 5, p. 98).

CHAPTER SIX

AND now what remains of this second book of the *Utopia*, so full of practical suggestion, yet mixed withal with so much delicate and inimitable raillery, must be left to console our patient readers with little further interruption on our part. But two points call for detailed comment if we are to pierce the surface of More's social thought to the deeper and more spiritual levels that lie beneath.

The first is that the religion of the Utopians was a *natural* religion, one, that is, that was not a revealed and therefore a *supernatural* one. For we read that until the Utopians made the acquaintance of Raphael Hythloday they had no knowledge of the supernatural revelation of Christianity, which, as More so frequently argues in his later writings, because it is a supernatural revelation must always and everywhere be necessarily and unchangeably true. " There are several sorts of religion," says Hythloday, " not only in different parts of the

island, but even in every town; some worship the sun, others the moon, or one of the planets. Some worship such men as have been eminent in former times for virtue or glory, not only as ordinary deities but as the supreme God; yet the greater and wiser sort of them worship none of these, but adore one eternal, invisible, infinite and incomprehensible Deity."

Like the Druids before them, the Utopians believed in the immortality of the soul; and Utopus, their king, "made a solemn law against such as should so far degenerate from the dignity of human nature, as to think that our souls die with our bodies, or that the world was governed by chance, without a wise, over-ruling Providence." Nor would this same wise king allow religious quarrels to imperil the stability of his kingdom; and "having understood that before his coming, the old inhabitants had been engaged in great quarrels concerning religion, by which they were so broken among themselves that he found it an easy thing to conquer them, since they did not unite their forces against him, but every different party in religion fought by themselves. Upon that, after he had subdued them, he made a law that every man might be of what religion he pleased, and might endeavour

to draw others to it by the force of argument, and by amicable and modest ways, but without bitterness against those of other opinions, but that he ought to use no other force but that of persuasion, and was neither to mix reproaches or violence with it, and such as did otherwise were to be condemned to banishment or slavery." [1]

And this he did because " he judged it was not fit to determine anything rashly on that matter ; and himself seemed to doubt whether those different forms of religion might not all come from God, who might inspire men differently, He being possibly pleased with a variety in it."

On this point Hythloday is using words almost identical, and sentiments certainly identical, with those of the Messenger, who represents the teaching of the reformers in More's *Dialogue Concerning Tyndale*, written thirteen or fourteen years later. For lack of the certainties of Divine Revelation, King Utopus fell back, as wise men needs must, upon private judgment in matters of religion ; and in a phrase that sums up this agnostic wisdom Hythloday proclaims that the Utopians laid it down " that a man cannot make himself believe anything that he pleases."

[1] *U.* ii. c. 9, pp. 170 *sqq.*

This maxim, appearing at first sight not only to excuse but also to justify any and every kind of religious belief, misbelief or unbelief, is, in fact, so true that it needs a balancing truth to make the whole truth of it quite unmistakably clear. It *is* true that a man cannot make himself believe what *he* pleases; for to opine is not to believe. But if he prays to God, God can make him believe what *He* pleases. God has given to every human being the gift of free-will; and, having done so, He will not do for a man what he cannot do for himself unless that man asks Him to do it. God commands us to believe, but He does not force us to believe, in this life. "*Ask* and *you shall receive*" is God's command and God's promise. "Lord, help thou mine unbelief" must be a man's prayer in willing obedience to that command and in order to obtain the promise attached to such obedience. And the belief which God gives to a man when he prays for it aright is belief in the *whole* of His Truth. God's Truth is One, it is all true, true always, true everywhere, and true for everyone that has the grace to believe in it. And as such we must receive it all, or not at all. As More himself puts it, in his *Dialogue Concerning Tyndale*,[1] to the Messenger who was arguing for

[1] Book i. c. 31, p. 127.

private judgment in matters of supernatural faith, "Ye must believe and may be sure that *all* that the Church telleth you is very true; and that it is the word of God." And then there are the words of Christ, "Amen, Amen, I say to you: he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up another way, the same is a thief and a robber," [1] a final sentence against all private judgment in matters of revealed truth. The door is the way of simple and creaturely obedience to Divine authority by means of which every true shepherd enters into his undiminished inheritance of supernatural truth. The fold is the Catholic Church in her capacity of guardian and interpreter of that truth. And the robbers and thieves are those who (often disguised as shepherds) climb up into the fold another way in order to steal from it what *they* think are the true parts of Divine Truth.

The second point that needs to be discussed still further is the difference between More and Hythloday on the subject of Communism.

In the first book it will be remembered that Hythloday said:

> I cannot think that a nation can be governed either justly or happily as long as there is any private property.

[1] *John* x. 1.

And to this More replied :

On the contrary, it seems to me that men cannot live conveniently where all things are held in common.[1]

Hythloday, then, as already shown, was a believer in compulsory State Communism ; and More was not. In the second book Hythloday introduces to the notice of the Utopians a kind of Communism which More did believe in, and very ably defended in his *Supplication of Souls* and in other books of his, a kind of Communism which was neither compulsory nor enforced by the State, but voluntary and so practical that it had been in practice for fifteen hundred years. And the following passage, in which Hythloday tells us how gladly the Utopians welcomed his mention of it, will afford us the basis of a still fuller explanation of it which we dare to hope will be as well received by those who read it as Raphael Hythloday's shorter reference to it was received by his Utopian friends.

After the Utopians had heard from us an account of the doctrine, the course of life, and the miracles of Christ, and of the wonderful constancy of so many martyrs, whose blood that was so willingly offered up by them was the chief occasion of spreading their religion over a vast number of nations, it is not to be

[1] *U.* i. p. 69.

imagined how inclined they were to receive it. I shall not determine whether this proceeded from any secret inspiration of God, or *whether it was because it seemed so favourable* to the *community of goods*, which is an opinion so particular, as well as so dear to them; *since they perceived that Christ and His followers lived by that rule*; and that it was *still kept up in some communities among the sincerest sort of Christians.* [1]

In the quotation just given two kinds of Communism are spoken of, the State Communism of the Utopians and the Religious Communism of the Christians, the latter being one of the chief things that attracted the Utopians to Christianity. It need hardly be said, of course, that "the sincerest sort of Christians" here referred to were those belonging to the communities of men or women known as the religious Orders of the Catholic Church, Carmelites, Augustinians, Benedictines, Dominicans, Franciscans, and so on, and which, beginning in early Christian times, have developed and continued until now. But let us get the contrast between these two kinds of Communism a little more clearly defined. The early Christians, we are told, as well as the "sincerest sort of Christians" ever since, *voluntarily* gave up their private property and shared their goods among those of their

[1] *U.* ii. c. 9, p. 172.

brethren who were in need, under that supernatural or divine impulse which we call charity, and which may be described as the love of God operating through the souls of the just.

But this is just the contrary of State Communism which *compels* its subjects to give up their private property, because those who believe in it have no effective belief that the divine impulse of charity can take possession of the human heart. And this is only to be expected of them, since they have no effective belief in God Himself.

But *More believed*, and all Catholics believe with him, *that the Holy Spirit of God, speaking* not only in the hearts of individual men and women but also and always until the end of the world *through the voice of the Catholic Church, teaches us how to turn our naturally increasing desires for pleasure, for property, and for power into a supernaturally decreasing desire for these very same things, good in themselves, but better when given than when received, and best of all when foregone for the love and glory of God and the relief of man's estate.*

Hence it is that if men and women will only *pray*, they can and will become, by their voluntary association in obedience to the Catholic Church, the most effective instruments of social betterment that in

this world it is possible for men to be. But this can only happen in so far as they themselves wish and desire it. For God, in giving to every human being the inestimable gift of free-will, has not bound Himself to better any man or society of men except in so far as they desire Him to do so—that very desire being in itself the essence of all true and effective prayer.

Here we touch the *fons et origo* of Catholic Social Philosophy—*a philosophy of human desires, disciplined, supernaturalised, redirected, and re-energised by the grace of God;* the same philosophy which More had in the mind when he wrote his *Utopia* and when, in his later controversial writings, he predicted the social miseries that would follow in the wake of a Protestantism that rejected it; the same that is left to us in the Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles; the same that we may read in those Encyclicals upon social reform written by Pope Leo XIII.

Let us briefly reconsider it.

It has often been said that the Catholic Church, unlike so many other institutional religions, can find a place and a work within its ordered system for every kind of genuine and humane enthusiasm, provided only that it will submit itself to such mental and

moral discipline as will fashion it to spiritual and social use. And in proof of this it is usually adduced that voluntary religious communities of a communistic character have persisted within the Church from Christ's day unto our own. Yet, on the other hand, it is likewise true that the Catholic Church has herself always been opposed to compulsory State Communism. Evidently, therefore, she holds that as there is a wrong kind of Communism, so also there is a right one.

We learn from the Acts of the Apostles that Communism of a kind existed in the first days of the Church; for we are told that the early Christians "were persevering in the doctrine of the apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread and in prayers.... And they that believed were together and had all things in common. Their possessions and goods they sold; and divided them all, according as each had need."

But how did it arise? Let us go farther back to the Gospels themselves. Christ's work while on earth consisted, partly, in forming a special band of close followers who, after His Ascension and the coming of His Holy Spirit, were to become the rulers of His Church, the teachers of His doctrine, and the examples of His life to the world. They were to

be the spearhead of the Church Militant. Their work would be very difficult; and it required a training and a self-dedication of no ordinary kind, something that the rest of the Christian body would not be called upon to undergo. For these immediate and specially chosen followers of our Lord were to be as He had been while on earth. He had given up His own will; He had been poor; He had led the heavenly life in which there is no marrying or giving in marriage. And so, to perpetuate the memory of His own example, they also were called and assisted by God to give up their own wills, to be poor, and to lead the same life of heavenly virtue. And from the same Example there arose the monastic life which was the kind of Communism so admired by the Utopians because, at first sight, they thought it so like their own.

But it was not like their own; for theirs was a kind compulsorily enforced by the secular power of the State with equal obligation upon all, while the kind of which they had been told about, as practised "by the sincerest sort of Christians until now," was a special form of the supernatural life to which a very few Christians out of each succeeding generation were called by God Himself.

Looking back over the history of Christendom,

how very few out of all the millions of good Christian souls, now in heaven, have been called to lead this voluntary and supernatural life of religious Communism—they who were the haft and not the spearhead of the Church Militant. And when we realise the difficulty of it, and recall our Lord's own words about it, we are not surprised. How few in any generation can voluntarily give up the control even of their small possessions in this world? Yet our Lord called the rich young man to give up his, even though they were great. How few can voluntarily forego the prospect of wedded life? Yet our Lord said, "He that can take it, let him take it." And last, and perhaps most difficult of all, how few, for His sake, can undertake to be until death at the beck and call of another's will? Yet all this has been the voluntary sacrifice of many chosen souls. But not unless they were called, not unless they were able, not unless they had first sat down to count the cost. And so these "sincerest sort of Christians" from the beginning of Christianity until now, in spite of the betrayals of many a Judas and the failings of many a Peter, have perpetuated, like a seal upon the wax, the impression of the fulness of the likeness of Christ upon the succeeding generations of mankind.

But let us remind ourselves that while this threefold renunciation of human desires, good and natural in themselves, provides the foundation upon which the highest kind of earthly spiritual life has always rested, yet it is a renunciation of what is good in itself for the sake of something that is better. For what it renounces is the good life ordained by God for the great majority of Christian souls. Hence it is that the Church, while making provision for such a life of renunciation, is nevertheless herself the constant champion and defender of the natural life of the normal Christian man—a life, too, in which heroic sanctity is always possible. For these three desires, renounced only by those who have a special call from God, are the three strongest desires known to human nature; and upon their continuous and reasonable enjoyment and satisfaction the maintenance of human life must ever depend.

If anyone were asked to describe in a single word the genius of Christianity, he would rightly choose the word "inwardness." And in so doing, if rightly understood, he would also be naming the cause of its "outwardness" or visible universality. For our Lord, in judging of religion as He found it among His own people, condemned only one kind of outwardness—that which was false because put on

from the outside. On the other hand, there was a kind of " outwardness " which never failed to gain His full approval—that, namely, which sprang from a true spiritual " inwardness."

In all His teaching, and especially in His teaching to His nearest followers, Christ dwells continually on this " inwardness " of the Christian life, and contrasts it with the more outward laws of the old dispensation, not indeed to make them of less but rather of more effect. And the sum of it all is to be found in that saying of His that where a man's treasure is, there also his heart will be. *A man's inmost desires are the surest index of his nature. By altering a man's desires you can really alter his nature ; but short of such an alteration, no change in the outward man is sufficient to make him better or worse.* And that is why the whole discipline of the Church centres round this problem. And thus it is easier to understand why the three strongest desires known to human nature become the focus of operation in every soul that is striving for the prize of the life of the world to come.

It was even so with Christ Himself when, as an example to us, He was subject to temptation in the wilderness before undertaking His public mission ; and the nature of His three temptations correspond

exactly with the nature of these same three strongest desires known to the natural man. We may now name them, all three in order, before asking in detail what principal part each one of them is destined to play in every form of human life, whether individual or social, whether political or religious :

1. The desire for pleasure,
2. The desire for property,
3. The desire for power.

Man is a creature of desire, and being a fallen creature, his desires run to unreasonable and even to unnatural excess, unless he becomes amenable to the influence of the grace of God. But these desires in themselves are not unreasonable, being part of the first equipment of unfallen man ; and only now because men, even apart from actual sin, are subject to the weakness and deprivation of the first Fall, do they tend, unless corrected by grace, to deordination both in the spiritual and in social life. There can be, then, only one radical cure for such deordination of human desires, and that a spiritual one ; although, of course, much may and should and must always be done by the civil powers to limit and discourage the " occasions " of individual and social evil.

Christ, both in what He did and in what He taught, was primarily concerned with spiritual results. His kingdom was not of this world. But He often used outward and physical means towards His inward and spiritual end. Many social reformers realising this have been discouraged, fearing that His work might have little effect upon our present social and political evils. But closer attention to His teaching should banish all such discouragement from their minds. One remembers in this connection that passage in St. Luke's Gospel,[1] where one of the multitude said to Him : " ' Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me.' But He said unto him : ' Man, who hath appointed me a judge or divider over you ? ' " And then, turning to the multitude, He added : " Take heed and beware of covetousness : for a man's life doth not consist in the abundance of things which he possesseth." After that follows the parable of the rich fool ; and in conclusion, " So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God." And last of all, speaking as it were more intimately to His disciples, He said : " Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His justice, and all these things shall be added to you." There is

[1] xii. 13-31.

probably no scriptural passage where Christ so clearly distinguished between the radical cause of social trouble—which is always of a spiritual nature —and its outward symptoms, whose removal can make no real difference to the trouble itself, since it lies always in the inmost nature of a man's desires. Notice, too, that when once the spiritual trouble has been cured, the social trouble will cease. "All these things [in so far as they are helpful to your spiritual life] will be added to you."

Here we are reminded of what so many humanitarians, since the time of Rousseau, have been tempted to forget, that the chief obstacles to social reform are more from within a man than from without. The kingdom of heaven is from within; but before a man has sought and found that kingdom, he is not only at war with his own good, but also with the good of the society in which he lives. As Christ Himself has said, the anti-social forces of human life are from within; "for from within, out of the heart of a man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness."[1] And what are these sins and vices and crimes but the outcome of

[1] *Mark* vii. 21, 22.

the unregulated and unregenerated human desires for pleasure, for property, and for power? One truth must be faced by all who would reform human nature, and that is that human nature cannot be reformed except by Him who first created it, afterwards redeemed it, and is waiting to sanctify it.

The Catholic Church is often accused of being averse to social reform; and as this accusation is believed by many who are not Catholics, and perhaps by some who are, the accusation should be examined with care.

First of all, it is clear that, as in the case of Christ, so in that of His Church, the main object is not social reform, but the perfection of individual souls. The Church is concerned with the whole welfare of each particular human soul and not merely with that one part of it, important though it be, which covers the tiny span of its individual life on earth. This earthly life is, to every truly spiritual being, at its longest but a short affair, and, at its best, but a difficult period of probation preparatory for a life to come. But in order to make the most of it, and the best of it, even here, it must be understood for what God means it to be. The best that this present life can give us, or that we can give to it, must therefore be subservient to one main purpose: "Seek ye

therefore first the kingdom of God, and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you."

To every genuine and persevering Catholic, therefore, *a time should come when God Himself is realised as the first and unique object of all his desire.* And when by the supernatural power of the grace of God, co-operating indeed with his own active consent, this has been realised, that realisation will gradually effect and bring into subordinate activity to itself every other desire that burns within his soul, even those which are naturally the strongest of all—namely, the desires for pleasure, for property, and for power.

Looked at, then, from the economic side, how will these three naturally predominant desires be affected by the supernatural power of the grace of God?

And here it is only fair to the Church herself that we should limit our considerations to those of her children who habitually strive to live in a state of grace; for even the grace of God does not help those who refuse to co-operate with it, except in an indirect way. The life they are desirous to lead will not be easy; for it will involve training, self-discipline, self-denial. There will be nothing vague or lazily acquiescent about it. "I fight," says St.

Paul, "not as one that beateth the air." He knew his main object and also the difficulties and dangers to be overcome in the untiring pursuit of it. "I chastise the body, and bring it into subjection; lest perhaps when I have preached to others, I myself become a castaway." But discipline, after all, is not an end in itself; the pain and struggle of it are instrumental only, the sure way to a freer, healthier, happier, and more effective activity of soul. And it brings with it an increasing compensation for all the hardship involved—a compensation which is nothing less than a gradual or, in some cases, an immediate change in the very nature and direction of the soul's desires—desires that, heretofore, had so urgently and so irresistibly warred against the soul.

For human desire ever seeks what it wants under the semblance of good. A man wants something very much because, then and there, it seems so good to him. And the more immediately and insistently desirable it seems to him, the more he wants it and the more of it he wants. Are not all the social troubles of the world to be traced back, in the first instance, to the terrible acquisitiveness of uncontrolled human desires? to bad people wanting things that are bad for them very badly, and often at fearful cost to other people, and even to good

people wanting more of good things than is good for them, also at other people's expense ?

But when upon all this conflict of inordinately acquisitive desires in any particular human soul there supervenes the operation of divine grace, a remarkable change is initiated. Those very desires themselves, previously so merciless in their demands and so disorderly in their effect upon the soul, become less and less irresistible ; and the soul, which perhaps for years has striven in vain for mastery, may at long last behold herself victorious in the strife.

And, thereupon, the Holy Spirit will further endow that soul with the " expulsive power " of a higher and mightier and more heavenly affection. Her heretofore strong and natural desires for pleasure, for property, and for power will grow less attractive, less insistent ; and since what is less urgently desired is less urgently striven for, even the actions of her outward life will grow less and less conformable to the likeness of her former desires.

And then it may be that the sun of God's radiant love will rise above the horizon of the firmament of the soul. What once were seen as stars very attractive in the natural order now become as points far less influential than before.

On the other hand, whatever there was of goodness rooted within the natural being now grows more rapidly to perfection in the sunshine of that better day.

Thus it is that by succeeding stages and degrees *the very nature of the soul's desire is changed and, indeed, reversed; and the man in whom this change takes place, from being on the whole a self-gratifying and acquisitive man, tends more and more to become a self-denying and distributive one.* And so we are justified in coming to the conclusion that a man, by faithfully using the manifold supernatural influences put at his disposal by the Catholic Church, whether they be of self-discipline or consolation or instruction or of prayer and sacramental habit, will necessarily undergo a substantial change for the better, not only in his spiritual but also in his social being. And, furthermore, are we not also justified in saying that these changes are of such a kind as to outrival in their results all the efforts of professedly social institutions and agencies devised by the State for his one specific end? For the social improvement of the whole man brought about by means of the Catholic Church by the operation of divine grace is wrought from within outwards, and so is likely, nay almost certain, to be more real, permanent and

effective than the outward compulsions of any merely human individual, society, or institution.

Finally, it may be noted that there is a marked difference between the methods of the Catholic Church and that of secular agencies in their respective attempts to bring about social betterment. In order to bring about at all successfully particular social reforms, it is necessary to take into consideration the whole living balance of human nature. To ignore or exclude or repress or stimulate unduly any one of those strong but delicately balanced forces without proper reference to all the rest is necessarily to court ultimate failure. The Catholic Church, which never makes the mistake of short-circuiting her reforms through undue haste, is often reproached by zealous secular reformers for being reactionary because in her social remedies and expedients she unobtrusively resorts to some inward and spiritual and often indirect remedy rather than to ones more obvious to hasty thought which take too little account of the complexities of the problem in hand.

The desire for private property, for instance, is one of the three cardinal desires natural to man. And because it exists so powerfully in individual natures it has ever been liable to monstrous exaggeration and abuse, particularly on the part of the

more powerful individuals in any given community. The obvious way to deal with such an abuse, on the part of hasty reformers, is to say that because this desire for property is the occasion of such great abuses it is a bad thing in itself, and in consequence the private possession of property is thenceforward forbidden. One need not, in this place, suggest the difficulties of such a policy. But let the same policy be applied to the abuse of the remaining two cardinal desires of the natural man. The desire for pleasure also leads to horrible and grave abuses. Why does not the State immediately forbid any further natural indulgence of the senses? Or, lastly, since man's natural desire for power often leads, by its abuse, to dreadful social tyrannies, why should it not be likewise branded as unsocial and its further gratification be thenceforward forbidden to every individual in the community? The logical application of so unsound a principle is sufficient to reveal its complete absurdity.

And, of course, no advocates of State Communism have ever had the hardihood to propose the complete suppression of all three of these cardinal desires of our common nature at once. Their policy has been far less logical. For, wishing to suppress the desire for private property, and wishing, at the same time,

to limit the desire for power to a very small and ruling section of the community, they have attempted to console the great remnant by allowing them individually to gratify their desire of pleasure to an almost unlimited extent. One does not wish to exaggerate, but it is necessary to exemplify the unbalanced shortsightedness of such policies as these.

But again, and once for all, let us put the all-important question of the individual desires of individual men and women and children: How are they to become more and more supernaturally *distributive and self-denying* instead of becoming more and more *acquisitive and self-gratifying*, as without God's help they naturally tend to become?

On God's part, by *grace*, which is the divine and impulsive power of the unselfish and distributive life; and, on our part, by *prayer*, which, at its best, is just our own inmost desire for God and His goodness. "Ask of Me, and ye shall receive," "Ask for Me, and you shall receive Me," says the God of all good desire. "Desire Me, and I will answer your desire by coming to visit you as a Friend." And if, after He has first visited us, we still desire Him, He will ask us to visit Him; for

just as we have a home on earth, so also has He—His Church. And if we return His visit, He again will return ours; and so long as we desire it, He will continue the habit of His Divine friendship. And as His friendship for us brought Him on earth in the form of our humanity; so if we continuously desire it, it will grow stronger, and as it grows, we shall grow like Him. And in the great home of His Church we shall taste the fulness of His Divine hospitality from the Table that He has set in the midst of it. And as often as we have tasted of it, we shall go forth from that Table into our daily life less and less full of self and more and more full of Him; so that finally we shall become distributive in the most spiritual sense of that word. For through the souls of His faithful God is diffusive of Himself, and diffusive of Himself to a world that without Him can never be at peace.

There are two ways of altering men and women and children for the better, and because man is a creature of body and soul, both are needful; but one is the chief and all-important way. Go tc any slum. There is the slum, the outward environment of so many human beings, each one of them endowed with an immortal soul, each one of them a desiring spirit that nothing in this life can adequately

satisfy. And in this slum, which is outwardly the same for all, there will be different human beings, each with his own spirit, each with his own many and different objects of desire. Clear away that slum, the quicker the better, and by any means that you please. But when that is done the same human beings will be the same as they were before, in each of their inward spirits, in each of their manifold and unsatisfied desires. You have done a great and a good thing in destroying that slum; but a greater and a better still remains to do. If you cannot get this greater thing accomplished in and for them, you will not have achieved the better and more difficult and only final solution of your social problem. How, then, is it to be done? You must work. Yes, but still more, you must pray; and you must get those you wish to help to pray too. And then, and only then, God Himself will come in and do the rest.

People think that prayer is not natural to man; but in a true sense nothing is more natural; for prayer is nothing but the expression of desire. What a man desires, that he prays for. If he desires bad things and desires them from a bad object his prayer is bad, but it is still prayer, the prayer of the idolater, as More himself told us in a

passage already quoted. But good prayer is more than natural. It is supernatural, because God and only God can enable us to pray aright, that is to say, to desire the good that He alone can give us, the only good that will satisfy, and satisfy us for ever, Himself. But before any soul can even begin to realise that satisfaction at all habitually, it must persevere in its prayer, in its desire for good, and at the cost of much weariness and conflict with the desires that war against the truest desire of its soul. But if it perseveres, the conflict can only end in one way: because no soul who desires the help of God and perseveres in that desire, can ever finally lose the battle of life. God has promised it, and His promise has never been broken to a single soul that took Him at His word and by perseverance in prayer compelled His Infinite Love to fulfil it.

But bad desires make us worshippers of idols, they are our daily and instant prayers for what is bad through excess, too much pleasure, too much property, too much power. No man can cease praying, then. But he can cease praying for what is bad. And he can do it by asking God to change the nature of his bad because excessive desires, not necessarily in words, but like that poor sinner, who

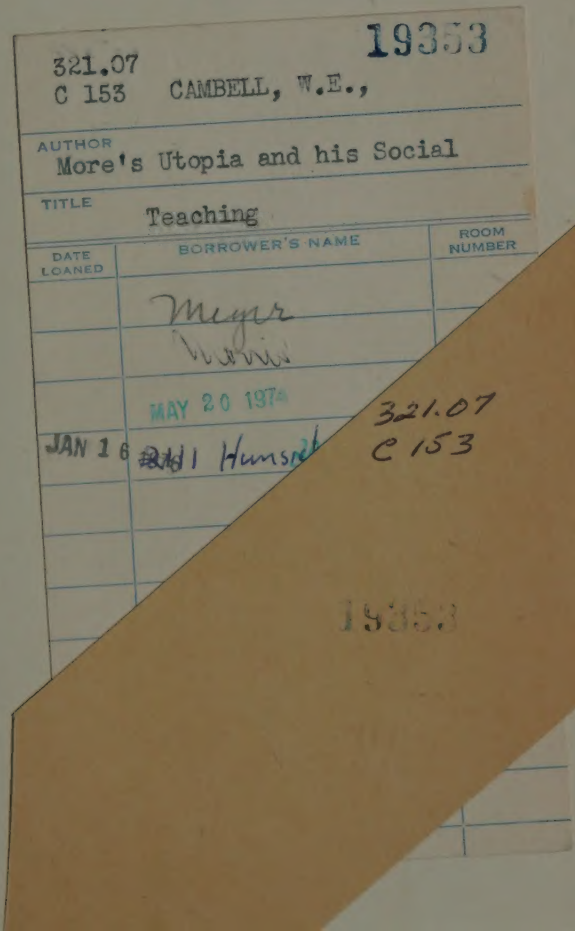
is every one of us, who went into the Temple and prayed from the depth of his repentant heart.

An attempt has been made to indicate the central principle of More's Catholic Social Philosophy as we find it, briefly, but none the less clearly laid down in his *Utopia* and amplified in his other writings. More did not need when he wrote the *Utopia*, as he needed later, to enlarge then and there upon what at that time was taken for granted by his fellow-Catholics in this country, but which later non-Catholic commentators upon the *Utopia* hardly even themselves suspected, much less made clear to others. And this again was natural, since for many generations Catholic philosophy, social or otherwise, has been classed with the old, far-off, and supposedly unhappy things that were said to have happened in the dark ages before Master Ridley was encouraged to light his candle. But now contemporary English writers on Social Economics are increasingly aware that something more than the candlelight of religious individualism is needed to illuminate our social darkness. Three quotations will serve to confirm this, as also to bring this study to a conclusion. "Economic progress depends upon social progress, and social progress implies

the emergence of a higher moral relation between individuals. Before the collapse of the older civilisation, the spirit of Christian fraternity had united noble and simple, bond and free, in a new and intimate relationship." [1] Or again: "The essence of the movement which begins with the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is the secularisation of social and economic philosophy." [2] Or again: "The very conception of religion as the inspiration and standard of social life and corporate effort has been forgotten." [3]

And, finally, let Cardinal Newman sum up for us all that we have been trying to express: "Apprehension of the Unseen is the only known principle capable of subduing moral evil, educating the multitude, and organising Society." [4]

[1] George Unwin, *Studies in Economic History*, p. 235.
[2] R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, pp. 7 and 8.
[3] R. H. Tawney, *The Acquisitive Society*, p. 227.
[4] Newman, *Discussions and Arguments*, p. 304.



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